METRO / A22

Fil-Am files P26-M
suit vs Calayans for botched penis surgery

LIFESTYLE / C1

Margarita Fores: From
best-dressed restaurateur to passionate industry leader

NEWS / A2

Palace to announce 10%
wage hikes only to gov't workers on Labor Day today

Now, gov't buying scanners to check 'poor' rice cards

By Jocelyn R. Uy and Christine Avendaño

OUTLETS DESIGNATED to sell government-subsidized rice to poor communities will be equipped with scanning machines that

HOW, DON'T / A2

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Thursday, May 1, 2008 ★★ 10 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 143 P10 www.inquirer.net

'Jamby' asks court to block lawyer of billionaire aunt

By DJ Yap

THE "NICE TELENOVELA" BEGINS.

Sen. Ana Consuelo "Jamby" Madrigal yesterday moved to block the lawyer of her late aunt, Consuelo "Chito" Madrigal-Collantes, from executing the latter's last will and testament that had completely left her out.

Madrigal's counsel, Ernesto Francisco Jr., asked Judge Oscar Pimentel of the Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 148

JAMBY / A4

Opec-style rice cartel up

5 Mekong nations led by Thailand agree to fix prices

JUST LIKE OIL Countries around the Mekong Delta—Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Burma—are forming a rice-fixing cartel like the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec). Thailand's prime minister announces on Wednesday. The grouping of the Mekong nations will be called the Organization of Rice Exporting Countries (Orec).

BANGKOK—THE COUNTRIES of Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam have agreed in principle to form a rice price-fixing cartel similar to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) as costs of the staple grain rocket, Thailand's prime minister said on Wednesday.

Thailand's Premier Samak Sundaravej said the grouping of Mekong nations would be called the Organization of Rice Exporting Countries (Orec).

"I have talked with Burma and invited them to join the rice exporting countries cartel, which will include Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, to fix the price," Samak told reporters.

He said Burma's Prime Minister Gen. Thein Sein, in Thailand for an official visit, had agreed to join, even though the military-ruled nation was not currently a large rice exporter.

"Thailand will help them in terms of technical support to improve their production for export," Samak said.

Samak said Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia had also agreed to join, and Thai Foreign Minister Nuppadon Pattama said Orec should begin meeting soon.

OPEC-STYLE / A19

Ermita: Senate ZTE probe's failure to link GMA, vindication

By Michael Lim Ubac and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE FAILURE OF THE SENATE BLUE ribbon committee to find direct evidence linking President Macapagal-Arroyo to the controversial National Broadband Network (NBN) deal is a "vindication" for the Arroyo administration, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said yesterday.

Ermita felt relieved that Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano admitted Tuesday that the Senate investigation of the scrapped $329-million NBN deal had yielded evidence "leading up to the Office of the President" but no direct testimony linking President Macapagal-Arroyo to the scandal-tainted project.

Sen. Pia Cayetano said he was baffled by Cayetano's statement that there was testimony linking the NBN deal to Malacañang but no direct evidence that would directly link the President.

"So who has the most responsibility sitting in Malacañang?" Lacson asked.

Cayetano, chair of the blue ribbon committee, said there was evidence leading up to the Office of the President, "but it is always better—easy to be in a court of law in an impeachment proceeding or in the blue ribbon committee—that there is direct testimony. (In this case), there is no direct testimony."

"That's very significant because the last of the matter is even if we listen to all interviews in the Senate, there

ERMITA / A19

All about 'secret' revamp from GMA herself

By Michael Lim Ubac

MAMBAJAO, CAMIGUIN—THE REshuffle of the Cabinet may be a "secret," as President Macapagal-Arroyo announced with giggles on Monday, but the herself has been coyly disclosing bits and pieces of it.

In a late-night chat with reporters on this tranquil island on Tuesday, the President dropped some crucial clues without being prodded, saying, for example, that the position of Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro was not included in the revamp.

"Gilbert is not part of the secret," she quipped, eliciting chuckles from reporters, most of whom had traveled from Manila to join her three-day Retin (roll-on, roll-off) caravan that began on Monday in Dumol, Surnigao, and ended yesterday in Cagayan de Oro City.

Ms Arroyo said "civilian supremacy" should be observed in the military establishment, which was why she was keeping Teodoro—a nephew of tycoon Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, a bar topnotcher and a former congressman of Tarlac—in her Cabinet.

The so-called new "singing tenors" in the Cabinet appear to be safe—for now.

When asked if Secretary Cerge Remonde of the Presidential Management Staff, Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes and Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando were part of the "secret," Ms Arroyo said: "So far, so."

The trio, along with Teodoro, serenaded their Commander in Chief with the classic Visayan ballads "Manod Nila" and "Usahay" during a party the other night in Camiguin

ALL ABOUT / A19

Palparan under fire for takeover of mine, port

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—RETIRED ARMY Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr. has seized a seaport involved in a land dispute, using soldiers and police ostensibly without authorization from their commanders, Zambales Gov. Amor Deloso reported yesterday.

"We were fooled by Palparan," said one soldier who joined in the takeover of the facility in Masinloc, Zambales. A policeman also used the word "nagoyo (fooled)" in co-

PALPARAN / A6

Fallen colonel sought AFP reforms, say 'mistahs'

By Nikko Dizon

FOND WORDS AND MEMORIES flowed at the necrological services held on Tuesday night for the Army colonel found dead in his quarters on April 24 with a single gunshot wound in the forehead.

Family members and colleagues gathered at St. Michael's Chapel at the Army headquarters in Fort Bonifacio described Roberto Caldeo as a warrior and a leader, an idealist and a dependable friend, and a loving and generous brother and uncle.

But Caldeo's friends from the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1983 also recalled his frustrations in the Armed Forces, and how, even shortly before his death, he had considered leaving the service to which he had dedicated his life.

In a eulogy, Senior Supt. Allen Bantolo recalled how in 2001, Caldeo spoke of his complaints about his senior officers in the military.

Bantolo said his "mistah" (chum-

FALLEN / A18

REALITY OR FANTASY

Was the Battle of Manila Bay on film?

DAYBREAK, MAY 1, 1898 US Adm. George Dewey and his naval convoy arrive just off Manila. COURTESY OF NICK DEOCAMPO

By Nick Deocampo

(The author is a filmmaker and author of a forthcoming book, 'America's Celluloid Empire: US Colonization and the Emergence of Cinema in the Philippines.')

ONE HUNDRED TEN YEARS AGO TODAY, "a splendid little war" tangled our fate as a people with two of the world's powerful countries.

COMMENTARY

The war in 1898 that broke out between Spain, the old-time maritime power, and the United States, the new kid on the block, brought the mighty US naval fleet to the Philippines.

The United States intended to free the Philippines from Spanish tyranny, as in Cuba, but later decided to keep it as a colony. On that fateful first of May, the course of world history changed. The triumph of the American naval fleet over the Spanish armada signaled the United States' ascent as a new world power.

WAS THE / A13

THE BATTLE OF MANILA BAY has been one of the celebrated themes in early US cinema.

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Some rain showers over southern Luzon and Visayas; cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times windy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

Area/Source	Temp. (Cond.)	Area/Source	Temp. (Cond.)
Baguio	Partly cloudy	Manila	Partly cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly cloudy	Subic	Partly cloudy
Legaspi	Partly cloudy	Tuguegarao	Partly cloudy
Coron	Partly cloudy	Iloilo	Partly cloudy
Puerto Princesa	Partly cloudy	Roxas, Capiz	Partly cloudy
Tagbilaran	Partly cloudy	Cebu/Mactan	Partly cloudy
Dipolog	Partly cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly cloudy
Davao	Partly cloudy	Butuan	Partly cloudy
Cotabato	Partly cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly cloudy

Sunrise/sunset: Manila 5:31 a.m./6:03 p.m.; Tides: Manila 12:08 a.m., 0.4 m; 6:15 a.m., 1.8 m; 12:31 p.m., 0.4 m; 6:39 p.m., 1.8 m

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Pay hike only for gov't workers

Labor Day increase highly unlikely for private sector employees

By Michael Lim Ubac and Jeannette I. Andrade

WORKERS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR WILL NOT BE GETTING any increase in wages today, but their counterparts in the national government can look forward to a higher take-home pay.

President Macapagal-Arroyo is expected to sign an executive order today, Labor Day, authorizing a 10-percent increase to the basic salaries of all state employees, covering national government employees and the uniformed services like public school teachers, professors, soldiers and the Coast Guard.

More than a million government workers will get a 10-percent increase effective July 1, said Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr.

He said the Department of Budget and Management had enough funds for the raise. He added that P4 billion for every employee was provided for in the P1-trillion 2008 budget.

"We will need P13 billion for it, although we still have to introduce because the adjustment in basic salaries will also affect pensions," Andaya said, adding that the wage hike is part of the wage adjustment process that started in 2006.

Under the wage hike, a Teacher I position will get a basic salary of between P12,630 to P14,397 a month, while an Army 1st lieutenant and a Philippine National Police Inspector will start receiving a base pay of P16,340 a month.

Workers in the private sector will not be as lucky as the National Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC) announced yesterday that petitions for regional salary increase petitions would not be resolved until after the end of May.

The announcement of an increase today is "highly unlikely," said NWPC executive director Cristeta Laguesma III as the regional wage boards can still invite the trade or processing workers' petitions in eight regions.

He said the boards are conducting public hearings and consultations, and economic fund study alibis the process is completed can the boards decide to grant or reject the petitions.

He said about eight regions are asking for across-the-board daily wage increases ranging from P50 to P150.

No improvement

In the national capital region and Central Luzon, workers have petitioned for P80 a day increase; in Cordillera, from P62 to P100; Western Visayas, P88; Eastern and Northern Mindanao, P100; Caraga, P122; and Central Visayas, P150.

At the launch yesterday of the PPP-PCI's productivity e-learning center for workers and entrepreneurs, Laguesma said there have been "no dramatic improvement" in the country's labor productivity for the past 10 years, ranking runners-of Asia-Pacific countries.

Labor productivity coordinates the overall national performance of labor, measured by dividing the gross domestic product by the gross number of workers, is considered as a measure of the technical or engineering efficiency of production.

Interviewed on board a Pacific Jet, an aide-de-camp on his way to Cagayan de Oro from Guiuljuan, Rizalist Secretary Edmundo Ermita says wage levels for the different regions will "in all probability be delayed."

Ermita was traveling with executive officials who attended the Cabinet meeting held en route to Camiguin. The meeting focused on the status of projects lobbied to the so-called General Macleod Highway from Iligan to Cagayan de Oro.

Ermita told reporters that besides the wage boards, three important measures for the benefit workers have yet to reach the President's desk for her signature.

Different workers' groups will urge the metropolis-led today with flags and banners as they mark Labor Day with marches and rallies to demand wage hikes and an end to high prices of rice, fuel and basic commodities.

Meanwhile, a group of former Cabinet officials yesterday blamed the worst of Filipino workers on the mismanagement of the Arroyo administration.

"Bad governance by Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her lobby on a massive scale," said the group that calls itself the Former Senior Government Officials (FSGO).

The FSGO, composed of Cabinet members in the Aquino, Ramos, Estrada and Arroyo administrations, noted that the workers' purchasing power has dipped more 60% due to unsound economic policies.

UN launches 'Day Off' drive in Singapore

SINGAPORE—AT HER DESIGNER JOB AS a domestic worker for a Singaporean family, Ardee Amoranto is encouraged to ask for a regular day off. Her employers told us:

"Sometimes, if I want to go to church, I cannot go out, because I have to stay off," said 29-year-old Ardee, who left her home in the Philippines to work in Singapore.

The United Nations thinks a regular day off is a basic right and on Thursday will launch its "Day Off" campaign to improve to press home this point. The goal is for this to become one day off a week.

The campaign is not the only pressure the government is being covered with.

Starting from January 1, employers will face an ensemble, as others of twice the pay and a compulsory day off have to enable someone, the Israel Inside Times newspaper said on Monday.

Indonesian and Sri Lankan maids are paid $200 a month in Singapore, and Filipinos up to $250. Reuters

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World getting more hostile for journalists

GLOBAL PRESS FREEDOM DECLINED in 2007 for the sixth year running, with worldwide restrictions imposed in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Vietnam, the rights group Freedom House said in a report issued Tuesday.

The Washington-based organization expressed concern about violence against local media in a number of countries, including Russia, Mexico and the Philippines.

Iraq and Somalia continued the most dangerous countries for reporters, the annual survey said.

The report said there was some improvement in the Middle East and North Africa due to greater access to satellite television and the Internet as well as a growing number of journalists willing to challenge government limits.

But the survey struck a pessimistic tone given global trends.

"For every step forward to open freedom last year, there were two steps back," said Jennifer Windsor, executive director of Freedom House.

The survey, which examines print, broadcast and Internet freedom in 195 countries, said only 18 percent of the world's population live in countries with free media.

In Mexico, the report found an "extremely high level of drug-related violence against journalists as well as the continued atmosphere of impunity surrounding attacks on the media." In Russia and Peru, reporters were the target of threats and physical assaults while in Colombia, there was a rise in attacks on journalists and economic uncertainty due to the continuing conflict there. AFP

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Justice laments shortage of lawyers

GUIMBAY TO POPULAR BELIEF that the country is overrun with lawyers, there is actually a shortage of lawyers, and courts are feeling the pinch, according to Supreme Court Justice Leonardo Quisumbing.

Quisumbing, who spoke during the graduation rites of law students at the University of the Philippines on Monday, said the lack of practicing lawyers is being felt by judges in outlying areas, including his hometown Marbella.

According to him, lawyers don't want to be the ones residing in the judges so that the total could start. But now, the situation is reversed and judges in some municipal courts have to wait for the parties' counsels because the lawyers are few and come from distant places.

In some instances, trials have to be scheduled in the afternoon because the lawyers would be attending another hearing or would be engaged in some other activity in the morning, he added. The judges would wait for the lawyers to come, even if they are late.

Courts are also saddled with a 229-percent vacancy rate and officials are hard put to fill this up, Quisumbing lamented.

Leila B. Salaverria

GRAFT ARRAIGNMENT

Nani Perez summoned to Sandigan

By Jocelyn R. Uy

A SAMBAYANIHAN ANTIgraft court has summoned ex-Justice Secretary Hernando "Nani" Perez on Monday for arraignment on robbery charges in connection with the $2-million extortion complaint lodged by former Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez.

The Second Division, to which one of Perez's four cases has been raffled off, set the arraignments at 1:30 p.m. on May 5.

He faces other cases—falsification of documents, violation of Republic Act No. 3019 (the anti-graft law) and of Rule 6.03 (the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Government Officials and Employees)—have been raffled off to the Third, First and Fourth Divisions, respectively.

1st appearance

Perez's wife, Susana, brother-in-law Ramon Arizo and business associate Ferdinando were named accused in the robbery and graft cases and were also ordered to appear before the court on Monday.

If the arraignments pushes through, it will be Perez's first appearance as the Sandiganbayan allowed he dodged arrest by posting bail in Benguet City last Monday, the same day the First Division issued a warrant of arrest against him.

His lawyers yesterday informed the Sandiganbayan that the P300,000 bail that Perez and his wife posted was approved and approved by the executive judge of the regional trial court of Batangas. In an attached letter, Executive Judge Ruben Galvez of Batangas RTC Branch 3 certified that the couple voluntarily surrendered to his court and that their bail has been duly approved by the court.

Last week, Sandiganbayan Presiding Justice Teresita Diaz-Baldos, who chairs the First Division, told Perez and his counsel to also be ready with their plea on the graft charges slapped against them on May 16, their next scheduled arraignment.

Perez was accused of extorting money from Jimenez, who was implicated in a bribery-tainted deal to swap between the National Power Corp. and the Industrias Metalurgicas Pescarmona Sociedad Anonima (Impsa) to build, rehabilitate and operate a hydroelectric power plant in Laguna.

Former President Joseph Estrada had alleged that he was offered a $14-million bribe for the contract's approval.

Erap's advice

In a privilege speech in 2003, Jimenez claimed that Perez tried to extort $2 million from him in exchange for not being compelled to submit damaging affidavits against Estrada. Jimenez had served as Estrada's "financial adviser."

Estrada was charged with plunder in 2001 and was convicted six and a half years later.

Prosecutors alleged that the former justice secretary had threatened Jimenez with "bodily harm by having him arrested and incarcerated in a city jail where he will die with lock, hardened criminals and drug addicts" when the latter refused to execute affidavits against Estrada.

They added that Jimenez, under threat, wired $1,999,955 to Estrada's account in Centro Bank on Feb. 21, 2001, which was later transferred to the private accounts of Arizo and the Perezes at EPF Private Bank AG in Switzerland.

Of the amount, $1.7 million was allegedly transferred to the Perezes' Swiss account.

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Joson, 2 others face graft raps

CABANATUAN CITY—FORMER Nueva Ecija Gov. Tomas Joson III and two provincial officials have been accused of graft and malversation of funds for allegedly failing to remit loan payments of provincial employees to the Quezon and Rizal Credit Guarantee Corp. (Quedancor).

The graft complaints were filed by Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo before Sandiganbayan, head of the Nueva Ecija provincial government's Public Affairs and Monitoring Office, against Joson as well as Gilda de Jesus and Asuncion Del Rosario-Santiago, both former Nueva Ecija acting provincial treasurers.

But Joson said yesterday he had yet to receive a copy of the charges.

"Dapatan ko nawalang kopya of the charge against me. I haven't seen a copy of the documents and so the complaint," Joson said. He issued a statement in a telephone interview. But he said the complaint was meant to facilitate and is part of a "grand plan" to place him and his administration in a bad light.

Quedancor loans

"But the factors that have in that no government money has gone into one's particular pocket, money or any property," Joson said, he added he had not ordered any employees to commit any irregularity. "It was also for every one's good," said. He asserted, however, said go against established rules taking any position or agreement," he added.

In his complaint before the Office of the Ombudsman, Sandiganbayan said the Joson and Santiago failed to remit loan payments amounting to P1,457,000 to the Quedancor, a government-owned and -controlled corporation, from August 2004 to May 2007.

The amount constituted payments made by provincial government employees through salary deduction, who availed themselves of loans under a livelihood assistance program of the national government through Quedancor.

Marcelo, who's held the post of acting provincial treasurer for three months in 2005, denied committing any wrongdoing.

De Jesus said she was already preparing to retire and was careful in her official actions. The other official named in the complaint, Santiago, was on sick leave and could not be reached for her comments.

"The money is there. I am sure about it," he said. He said the Commission of Audit (COA) has not made any unfavorable report regarding transactions made during his terms as governor.

Joson said he is expecting the camp of Gov. Aurelio Umali, who defeated him in the 2007 elections, to file other complaints against him.

Yesterday, a criminal complaint of abuse of authority and grave misconduct were filed against another member of the Joson clan, Vice Gov. Edward Thomas Joson, who allegedly made a series of appointments in the provincial government, contrary to the Local Government Code, while Governor Umali was abroad on a leave of absence with authority to travel from the Department of Interior and Local Government.

The complaint was filed by Marino Borja, officer in charge of the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office, who said he was one of the 20 officers in charge designated by Umali whose designations were revoked in a series of memorandums issued by Joson on March 14.

This, Borja said, constituted a violation of the Local Government Code and warranted the preventive suspension of Joson as vice governor to prevent him from threatening or hampering his prosecution. Frederico Bogue, Inquirer Central Luzon

Garcia is deputy speaker

THE MAN WHO FIRST CHALlenged then Speaker Jose de Venecia's leadership in the House in 2007 has received what is probably the best bird dog in the House—the post of deputy speaker.

The House plenary on Tuesday night elected Cebu Rep. Pablo Garcia, 41, to the second deputy speaker for the Visayas, the latter being longtime Deputy Speaker Raul del Mar, also of Cebu.

Garcia will join Kalibapi ng Mahirang Pilipino, Garcia's unanimous election may be seen as one of the conditions for building support toward the campaign of President Macapagal-Arroyo's new parties.

"Well, maybe you can treat it that way, but please do not forget Garcia is most deserving and will probably be an effective presiding officer in the floor," Speaker Prospero Nograles told the Inquirer.

Nograles is the president of Lakas-CMD. Mr. Arroyo is chairman of both administration party Lakas and Kampi. Aurora Almadares

NEW

Stubborn Arm Fat-
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One of the most stubborn areas of the body that holds fat is the back of the arms. Until now, there has been no available treatment that can target this area. These flabby, limp, dangling parts of the body are real problems even some slim women complain about. In London, they are called "tango wings." In New York, "lunch lady arms." Oprah Winfrey even coined the term "bat-wings" to describe them. Despite what they are called though, they remain the bane for women in any part of the world especially during summer season when everyone wants to wear sleeveless shirts with full confidence. The reality is, women's arms are more prone to sagging and being jiggly. In spite of exercising those biceps and triceps, drooping arms are still a naturally occurring result of the skin losing its elasticity and gravity.

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GMA ready to sign cheaper medicines bill

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CAMSURIN ISLAND—PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO said she is ready to sign into law the cheaper medicines bill even as she has yet to read the compromise version ratified by the Senate and the House.

To the Devotees of the SACRED HEART OF JESUS. Tomorrow, May 2, 2008 is the FIRST FRIDAY of the month. NOVENAS to the SACRED HEART OF JESUS and to ST. ANTHONY are given every FREE. Please get them from Jacinto st the Sanctuaire de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati City or Enzo Builders Center, Bldg., 170 Salcedo St., Legaspi Village, Makati City.

The President is supposed to sign the measure, called the "Universally Accessible Cheaper and Quality Medicines Act of 2008," on May 1, Labor Day.

"I don't know what the version is, frankly speaking. But the essence is if it can bring down the prices of medicine," she told reporters at a dinner here on Tuesday hosted by Camsur Gov. Jaybee Jesse Fortaleza.

The President said she presumed that the members of Congress had exercised their good judgment in approving the bill.

"We trust that what they agreed on after months of debate will be the most practical," she said.

The administration measure languished in the legislative mill for the past three years, deadlocked mainly over a provision requiring that doctors prescribe only generic drugs, until the President a few weeks ago asked legislators to lassoit the impasse by dropping the generics-only provision.

Senator Prospero Pegnolo and the House will be closely watching the law's implementation.

"I want to see prices of medicines drop dramatically after one or three months. If not, we would have plundered the hopes of our people with false promises and dreams," he said.

Both houses of Congress ratified the reconciled version of the Senate and House bills last Tuesday ending months of deliberations in the bicameral conference committee.

Both Rep. Exequiel Rivas and Sen. Prospero Nograles, the bill's principal authors, have been working for its passage since the previous Congress.

Aside from the generics-only provision, drug price regulation was the issue that stopped the bill's passage.

"Everyday is a crisis insofar as access to life-saving medicines is concerned. The root of inefficiency in the economy is beyond the reach of the ordinary Filipino which is why drug price regulation is inevitable," Rivas said. —Christine Avendaño, *Norman Bordadora* and Jerome Aning

New law will be toothless – Pagdanganan

THE FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE Philippine International Trading Corp. (PITC), the government agency that imports medicines and supplies the state-run drugstores, has warned that the new cheaper medicines law could fail as its promise.

While he is happy that Congress has finally approved the bill, Rodolfo Pagdanganan said the removal of the provision creating an independent drug price regulatory body has made the "Universally Accessible Cheaper and Quality Medicines Act of 2008" virtually toothless.

Pagdanganan said the new battle between cheap medicine advocates and the law's critics...foreign business chambers and pharmaceutical companies have expressed their opposition to it...will be over the implementing rules and regulations (IRR).

According to Pagdanganan, health advocates should make sure that provision he wrote into the IRR that would enable the health department restore a price monitoring board.

"We should fight for this in the IRR," he said.

"There should be pressure. I'm afraid that if there is no pressure, this will not be implemented," Pagdanganan said.

He said that in Thailand, companies seeking to increase the retail price of their drugs have to justify the hike to a bureau. —Kristine L. Alave

Correction

IN THE APRIL 30 issue, the banner story of the Metro Section—"Pasig tilts powered by LPG"...censored the first name of the Pasig City mayor. He is Mayor Robert—not Vicente—Eusebio.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for corrections of factual errors in writing to the Ombudsman, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5th Floor, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yakal St., Makati City; fax this to 897-8710; e-mail address: ibpdef@inquirer.com.ph.

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The Daily Gospel

Thursday, May 1, 2008
6th Week of Easter
Joseph the Worker

1st Reading: Acts 1:20-23
Gospel: Jn 12:24-26

Jesus went to his hometown and taught the people in their synagogue. They were amazed and said, "Where did he get this wisdom and these special powers? Isn't he the carpenter's son? Isn't Mary his mother and aren't James, Joseph, Simon and Judas his brothers? Aren't all his sisters living here? How did he get all this?" And so they took offense at him.

Jesus said to them, "The only place where prophets are not welcome is their hometown and in their own family." And he did not perform many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

Commentary:

The Church gives us this feast of St. Joseph the Worker as a reminder to us of the dignity of human labor. God Himself labored for six days to create the world, resting on the seventh. If work is befitting our God, how unfitting it is for us!

Depending upon our attitude, the work that we do can be a burden or it can be a means by which we give God glory and honor. Unless the work is sinful, no person lacks the opportunity to render to God a great gift through his or her job performance. May St. Joseph who was no stranger to hard work, intercede for us all today. Amen.

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Pimentel warns Palace against takeover of Meralco

SEN. AQUILINO PIMENTEL JR. YESterday told Malacañang to keep its hands off Manila Electric Co. amid reports that the state-owned pension fund, Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), had engaged the Lopez family in a proxy fight.

"I don't favor the takeover of private enterprises by government. I would like that they (officials) be forced to comply with the requirements of the law. Any governmental takeover is bad; government is not good at running any business," said Pimentel in an interview with reporters.

Pimentel said that if the government was concerned about the high rates being charged by Meralco to industrial, commercial and residential users in Metro Manila, "it could influence power prices by enforcing its rules."

"The government has enough powers to win in Meralco, it can do this with the ERPA (Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001) which is being strengthened further by the Senate," said Pimentel.

The government, through the GSIS, control a third of Meralco which was equivalent to the stake held by the Lopez group has management control of the utility. GSIS chair Winston Garcia wrote a management shakeup to promote more transparency in Meralco's operations and to ensure the public shareholders, which holds roughly 36 percent of Meralco, for votes to get majority of the 15 members board in the May 27 elections.

Pimentel said that there was no guarantee that the GSIS would do a better job in running Meralco than the Lopezes.

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March 1 - July 31, 2008

Promo Mechanics

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Promo Rules:
1) Promo period starts on March 1 and ends on July 31, 2008.
2) Nationwide raffle draw will be held simultaneously in four regions (Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao) on Aug 13, Friday (2008 with the presence of DOH/BIR representatives.
3) Deadline for the submission of customer's raffle entries shall be on July 31, 2008 at the closing hour of each Mercury Drug store except for all 24 hour operations which is at 12:00 midnight. Late submission of raffle entries is automatically disqualified.
4) All Prizes are tax paid and not convertible to cash.
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6) Names of winners will be published in major newspapers nationwide. They will also be notified either by mail, telegram, text message, or telephone as to when and where they will claim their prizes.
7) To claim the prize, winners must present any valid identification cards. (Drivers's license/SSS/GSIS/Passport/School/Company ID's) and the raffle ticket/s/ stub/s.
8) Prizes not claimed within 1000 days after the announcement of winners in the newspapers or after the notification will be forfeited in favor of Mercury Drug Corporation upon approval from DOH/BIR.
9) Employees of Mercury Drug Corporation and its subsidiaries, its advertising agency, its commissioned persons, including their relatives up to second degree of consanguinity and or affinity are disqualified from joining the raffle promo.
10) Raffle coupons have no serial numbers but have accurate trademarks approved by NBI.

Operational Period	Draw Date	Regional Draw	Place of Draw	Prizes: Major	Prizes: Consolation	Special Draw
March 1 to July 31, 2008	Aug 13, 2008 (Friday)	Metro Manila	Mercury Drug Co-Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. Makati Branch	2 Winners Mitsubishi Fuzion GLS	2 Winners Cash Prize P100,000.00 each	63 Winners (GSIS) accredited Government employees Cash Prize P50,000 each
		Luzon Branches	Mercury Drug Co-Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. Legaspi City	4 Winners Mitsubishi Fuzion GLS	4 Winners Cash Prize P100,000.00 each	
		Visayas Branches	Mercury Drug Co-Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. Iloilo City	2 Winners Mitsubishi Fuzion GLS	2 Winners Cash Prize P100,000.00 each	
		Mindanao Branches	Mercury Drug Co-Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. Makati Central Br.	2 Winners Mitsubishi Fuzion GLS	2 Winners Cash Prize P100,000.00 each	
TOTAL NO. OF WINNERS				10 winners	210 winners	63 winners

Special Draw:
One of the highlights will be the SPECIAL DRAW for 63 GSIS accredited government and/or non-government (NGO) charitable institutions which will receive P50,000 cash each with the total of P3,150,000.00. (The Lucky winners were taken from the list of charitable institutions submitted to GSIS).

For BIR-MRO Permit No. 2005 Issue of 2008.
* Picture may vary from actual prize.

63 The Spirit of Service Continues

Now, gov't buying scanners …

Encoding at

will send a number system unique to every family beneficiary to expedite [illegible] according to Social Welfare Secretary Esperanza Cabral.

Cabral said the family access cards to be issued to some 600,000 to 700,000 poor households in Metro Manila would [illegible] Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) [illegible] Government assistance (Pigao) social number, which shall be "issued until managed only" by the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

The bigas cards, a 15-digit reference number assigned to every family-beneficiary is being employed by the DSWD to ensure that rice sold by the National Food Authority (NFA) at P18.25 per kilo will not be resmuggled by those implementing the system for their relatives and friends.

608 outlets

Cabral said the bigas access cards was derived from three numbering systems: a code for the program, the Philippine Standard Geographic Code, and a number that starts from 0001 for the first family beneficiary in the barangay.

The bar codes with the bigas serial numbers will be read by scanning machines, which the Department of Agriculture and the DSWD have agreed to equip the 608 "Tindahan Natin" outlets that will sell the NFA rice, Cabral said.

"This way, we ensure credibility and transparency in the entire process," she added.

The access card will list down how much NFA rice purchase was made, where the purchase happened, who purchased it and who sold the NFA rice.

Income of P1,000 a month

A family of five or below with a monthly aggregate income of P5,000 is qualified to be issued the access card, according to Cabral.

The DSWD and Department of Agriculture have already sent out personnel to find out how much it will cost the government to acquire the scanning machines.

"But the figures will just be a small amount compared with what the NFA will spend to buy if the rice smuggling will not reach the intended beneficiaries," Cabral told the Inquirer in a phone interview yesterday.

The NFA earlier announced a plan to pull out government-subsidized rice from the wet markets and sell it directly to impoverished consumers in their barangays.

The pullout plan was triggered by reports that rice dealers who sacrificed commercial varieties that sell for more than P30 are themselves flying up in the wet markets, depriving the supply of the government-subsidized rice.

Where the poor are

The new distribution system was put in place by the agriculture department to prevent hoarding by households and runners that the cheap rice lands on the poorest tables.

In a statement, Undersecretary Celia Yñiguez said the bigas number system would help the department in pinpointing "who the poor really are and where they are."

"It will serve as our database in the provision of other basic social services to the poor and disadvantaged sector of our society," Yñiguez said.

Delayed by another week

Yñiguez said the distribution of access cards to poor families in Metro Manila would be delayed by another week or two to give social workers time to verify lists of poor households submitted to them by local government units.

So far, the DSWD has verified 58,081 family-beneficiaries in Pasig, Pateros and San Juan.

"Unless we have," which [illegible] names of the dead as well as residents of slum communities that were demolished, have been submitted to the DSWD.

"These anomalies were found after social workers began verifying partial lists of recipients in some parts of Pateros, San Juan and Mandaluyong.

Discrepancy

Cabral said the DSWD was using the figures provided by local governments, which placed at 700,000 the number of families deserving to be issued the access cards. She earlier placed the number at 600,000.

"The local government's estimate is bigger than the 387,800 families in Metro Manila that a recent National Statistics Office survey found to be living below the poverty line, according to Cabral.

Despite the discrepancy, she said her office would use the figures from the local governments and just validate them.

"The way to validate it is through the scientific method—take a random sampling and determine whether the entire community has a valid list or not," Cabral said.

Cabral said NFA officials had assured the DSWD that it would be able to supply the 700,000 families with rice below the [illegible] level.

"Their stocks are good for 30 days. They have stocks coming in all the time. So their stock level will not go below the 30-day supply," she said.

Still available

NFA rice will still be available in wet markets in Metro Manila for another two weeks when retail outlets officials are expected to finally complete their validation of the poorest families identified by local governments as beneficiaries of the cheap rice.

Cabral said Metro Manila mayors told her Monday that they could only give them the list of food-poor and vulnerable families in their respective areas within the week.

The list to be given by Metro Manila mayors will be on the basis used by the DSWD in issuing family access cards.

"And after that we will validate the list. It will take us a few days. So we are looking at two weeks before we can actually implement the program," Cabral told reporters in Cagayan de Oro City.

Cabral was among the Cabinet members who accompanied President Macapagal-Arroyo on board a roll-on/roll-off ferry boat as part of Ms. Arroyo's promotion of the Ro-Ro system.

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RP sticks to biofuels law despite food crisis

THE PHILIPPINES has taken every measure that its biofuels policy does not squeeze agricultural land and will keep up the campaign to reduce dependence on imported oil, energy officials said yesterday.

The National Biofuels Board only allows fallow land to planting biofuel crops, the board's executive director Roman Temoso told Reuters in an interview.

A surge in rice prices has badly hit the Philippines, the world's biggest importer of the grain. The government has banned conversion of agricultural land to other uses while globally lucrative biofuels programs are under attack because of dwindling land supply for food crops.

"The domestic situation is quite different from what is happening globally," Temoso said. "We have a very different situation—biofuels as an industry it's not a threat to our source of food supply."

Since a biofuels law came into effect in May 2007, a number of biofuel projects have offered their property to the government for biofuel use, but farmers said the government was not careful not to accept areas suited for food crops.

To date, the board has accredited 233,325 hectares of land, to be used for planting biofuel feedstocks.

"These are fully funds, investments funds that we are accountable for approved land crops," Temoso said. "We have a very strong line preserving our agricultural lands, so that before a biofuel certification from plantation can happen, it should have [illegible] approval," Reuters

Biazon presses bill on Spratlys

AGAINST EFFORTS by Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago to withdraw the bill, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, chair of the Senate committee on national defense, added his weight to having the Senate tackle bills that seek to amend the country's baselines to territorial boundaries.

In filing Senate Bill No. 2215, Biazon became the fourth senator to file a bill by a new definition of the archipelagic baselines, after Senators Aquilino Pimentel Jr., Edgardo Angara and Juan Ponce Enrile.

Biazon said his bill seeks to "reinstate our sovereignty" over the contested Spratlys islands, locally called the Kalayaan Island Group.

But his bill contemplates that the Kalayaan Island Group—as it is referred to under Presidential Decree No. 1596—shall remain a regime of Philippine territory—be treated as part of the "regime of islands" or outside the archipelagic baselines "to satisfy" article 121 of the Unclos" United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea).

Santiago, who chairs the Senate committee on foreign relations, has insisted there was no need for the country to revise its archipelagic baselines and comply with the May 2009 deadline under the Unclos.

She has also refused to conduct public hearings on the archipelagic baselines bills. [Inova Pinsal]Reuters

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'Jamby' asks court to block lawyer of billionaire aunt

From page A1

to deny the April 17 motion of Collantes' lawyer Estelito Fernandez seeking a the issuance of letters in the execution of the will to start the distribution of the billionaire socialite's property to the heirs.

Fernandez contended that neither Teodoro nor his late firm, Sycip, Gorres, Velayo & Co., were real parties in interest since the relationship with Collantes was effectively terminated at her death.

But Madrigal said in a manifestation that Teodoro was not a mere counsel to Collantes but "a family member."

"The issue is deeper than what people think. The issue is not money. The issue is very complex. There are a lot of issues that [if they become public] ... [for] why someone had said.

Modes of termination

In his motion, Francisco said the attorney-client relationship may be terminated by either "the act of the client, the act of the attorney, the death of the client, the death of the attorney or the accomplishment of the purpose for which it was created."

He said it was "widely recognized" that upon the client's death, "the attorney has no further authority to appear, save to inform the court of his client's death and to take steps to safeguard the decedent's interest, unless his services are further required by the administrator parties."

Francisco cited as examples the cases of the heirs of the late Florentina Tuguid Yda, cic Habrero vs. Court of Appeals et al., the heirs of Mariano Segura vs. Court of Appeals et al., among others.

Teodoro had earlier asked Judge Pimentel to issue letters testamentary—or documents stating the authority in the execution of an estate of a person who has died—to Darry Jr. and Aurelio Montinola III "in order to administer [Collantes'] estate ... and put into effect her will."

Dr. and Montinola, the husband and son of Cecilia Yulo Montinola, had been named executors and trustees of Collantes' will.

Validity of will

Francisco also intends to file a motion for intervention to question the validity of Collantes' will, which she purportedly executed in September 2006 and which has since been the subject of a legal dispute.

"The will is not valid, and the process by which it was supposedly produced is questionable," he said in an earlier interview.

Francisco said that since Collantes' will was invalidated, her estate would be distributed among her surviving siblings and nine nephews and nieces after deducting the lawful 50 percent share of her spouse.

The Montinola family was prominent in banking and shipping and used to have interests in coal, oil, cement and the media. Collantes' father Vicente Madrigal, a coal, oil and sugar trader from Aklan, assigned to her the management of the Rizal Cement Group of Companies.

She also held executive positions in the Alabang Commercial Corp., Evergreen Cultivar Management Corp., Amazon Inc., SOM Management Corp., Aquatec Food Center Inc., Metrobank and Peoples Bank Inc.

Collantes also chaired the board of trustees of the Conservatory of Music of the Philippines, which she established to help impecunious families. With a report from Inquirer Research

PHILANTHROPIST: The heiress was generous to Municipal Foundations, which she established to help impecunious families. With a report from Inquirer Research

Palparan under fire for takeover of mine, port

From page A1

planning Mr. participation in the incident on Tuesday.

Dolores, who went to the site on Sunday to avert tension, said that a resolution by the police and military chair of command allowed Palparan to take over the port owned by the Consolidated Mining Inc.

The State Investment Trust Inc., which employs the 24 Hours Security Corp. where Palparan works as a consultant, is claiming a portion of the 20-hectare port, Dolores said.

"The soldiers used force," said Dolores. "There were 30 Army soldiers in all. They had no complaints."

Dolores said that the soldiers were from the 24th Infantry Battalion (IB), some of them coming from Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija. There was also a team from the Philippine National Police Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (PNP-CIDG) and 40 security guards, he said.

"They were all taking orders from Palparan," Dolores said.

Not first time

The Hinatuan incident was not the first time that Palparan had mounted a takeover of a mine firm's property after his retirement.

Officials of the Dev-Asia Mining and Development Corp. on Tuesday filed charges of robbery, grave coercion and serious illegal detention against Palparan and 16 others after they allegedly took over the firm's mine site in Delta Rosario in Trinidad, Benguet, on April 12.

Palparan denied the charges. "We only secured the area. I only help my friend, lawyer Atty. Villacci, who has a claim on the area," he said.

Delta Resolution Trinidad Mayor Evelyn Dulnuan sounded Palparan. "He armed groups should cease that area. The local government concerned would be responsible for that incident," she said.

Palparan denial

Palparan dismissed Dolores's statements.

"Negative," Palparan told the Inquirer when asked if he accompanied the troops there. He said he was "merely a consultant" of the security agency and declined to comment on the operations.

Palparan was the 7th Infantry Division chief until his compulsory retirement at age 56 in September 2005.

Human rights activists have called Palparan a "berdugo (butcher)," accusing him of espionage to extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearance and human rights violations increased in his campaign against communist insurgents.

Having just retired and with his widely circulated reputation, Palparan's mere presence might have prompted the troops to just call along, one police source told the Inquirer.

PALPARAN: Reputation precedes him

Unwittingly used

"They realized they were unwittingly used by Palparan when he instructed them to secure the entire area," said the source.

Noting on "hours the face of the military and the police," Dolores said he would not if he was to meet Palparan at 11 a.m. Tuesday.

"Our agreement was that the soldiers and the policemen would sit pull out, only the security guards would remain. By nightfall, what he did was bring in soldiers in plainclothes," Dolores said.

Senior Supt. Rodolfo Mendoza, Zambales police director, said Palparan and his men left the port at 3 p.m. yesterday.

Lt. Col. Philip Lapitoc, chief of the 24th IB, dispatched troop who ordered him in field his men in the port. He said Brig. Gen. John Bonifer, inspector general of the 7th Infantry Division (ID), began an inquiry into the case on Tuesday night.

"We have to determine if active military personnel were involved," Bonifer said, adding that only a squad of 12 soldiers from two companies were.

Takeover unauthorized

Field military commanders in the area take orders from Brig. Gen. Ralph Villanueva, 7ID chief, the police from Chief Supt. Errol Dec, Central Luzon police director.

Dolores said the takeover was "unauthorized."

Senior Supt. Guillermo Lorenzo Eleazar, chief of the regional CIDG, said Allen Bonito, president of the firm Investments Trust Inc., asked for "immediate assistance on the presence of armed men roaming in their property," in a letter to the CIDG on April 22.

Eleazar said he sent a team to the area in response to Bonito's request.

Troops not involved

"Our CIDG personnel reported that they did not know that an takeover would happen. They also did not know that General Palparan would be in the area. They did not take orders from him. They decided to stay in the vicinity of the port instead, "Eleazar said.

"[Palparan] has a security agency with some retired soldiers. It was the CIDG that asked [the 24th IB] for assistance, not Palparan. But our troops were not involved in the takeover. They stayed in the vicinity to see the CIDG and security guards that entered the school," said Eleazar.

He said he allowed the 24th IB to help because there were "many armed groups" in Zambales.

Eleazar also said his troops could not take orders from Palparan because "he is already a civilian."

"We will not allow that. We require that our soldiers adhere to the chain of command. Definitely, he was not recommending our troops. We did not know Palparan was there," Villacorta said.

Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Madamba, chief of the military's Northern Luzon Command, has ordered an investigation. "I will not tolerate this," he said. "Bunch should roll." With reports from Grace Idlas and Germelo Reyes, Inquirer Central Luzon

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- Skills demonstration
- Awarding of livelihood projects to workers

PROGRAM

8:30 – 9:00 am	Assembly
PART I	Opening of Jobs & Livelihood Fair
9:00	Ribbon Cutting / Walk-through
9:15	Photo Ops
PART II	Main Program
8:30 – 9:00	Opening Program Ecumenical Prayer Mr. Tomasuelo S. Sujo, Jr. President, KMFU National Anthem DOLE Choir
9:00 – 9:40	Welcome Remarks Atty. Allen S. Montalbo, Assistant, FFW
9:40 – 10:00	Messages SMC Ms. Josephine C. Pastia, BAPC Workers in the Informal Sector DOH Dr. Maria Bernadeta C. Guzman, Center for Overseas Workers PGU Ms. Esperanza S. Dyangco, President, PGEA Intermission Number DOLE Choir PTZ/BOI Mr. Victorino F. Mateo, President KLU Mr. Gerard N. Sison, VP for Operations FFW Atty. Sonny G. Matula, Vice-President TUPAS Mr. Romeo D. Arca, National Secretary APW Mr. Angelito P. Cardenio, President NATU Mr. Reginaldo S. Rodriguez, Executive VP WWPDI Mr. Leonardo S. Desierto, President Intermission Number TUCP Band
10:00 – 10:40	Labor Day Message Atty. Democrito T. Mendoza, Sr., President, TUCP
10:40 – 10:50	Reading of Labor Day Manifesto Mr. Vladimir A. Tupaz, Secretary-General, TUPAS
10:40 – 11:00	Message of the DOLE Secretary Secretary Marianito D. Roque
11:00 – 12:00	Launching of GMA Job Center Kiosk Ribbon Cutting Workforce Overview AWARDS and PRESENTATIONS Philhealth Certificates Certificates of Competency Raffle of Major and Minor Prizes 2 Condominium Units with VP Noli de Castro
12:00	Lunch / Live Band Entertainment
PART III	Entertainment
1:30 – 4:00 pm	"Kay sa Manggagawa Concert" by Smart Communication

REGION	ACTIVITY	VENUE
CAR	Jobs Fair	SM Atrium, Baguio City
I	Jobs and Livelihood Fair Launching of GMA Job Center Kiosk Philjobnet on-line registration	Lorma Colleges, Carlatan, San Fernando City, La Union
II	Jobs Fair Launching of GMA Job Center Kiosk	Santiago (Isabela) City Hall and Apani Gymnasium Pasco Reale Mall, Tuguegarao City
III	Jobs Fair Launching of GMA Job Center Kiosk	Robinson's Starmills, San Fernando, Pampanga
IV-A	Jobs and Livelihood Fair Launching of GMA Job Center Kiosk	Laguna State Polytechnic Univ. (LSPU), Sta. Cruz, Laguna Robinson's Mall Daanservinas (Cavite) and Lipa City
IV-B	Jobs Fair Launching of GMA Job Center Kiosk	Immaculate Heart of Mary Academy, Pinamalayan
V	Launching of GMA Job Center Kiosk	Legazpi and Naga City Halls
VI	Jobs Fair "Handog" Jobs Fair Caravan for Maritime Sector Launching of GMA Job Center Kiosk	Metro Dome, Singcang, Bacolod City La Paz Plaza, La Paz, Iloilo City Hataj Foundation / ABS-CBN / SM City Iloilo VMA Global College, Bacolod City W. Visayas College of Science and Tech., La Paz, Iloilo Robinson's Place Bacolod City and Iloilo
VII	Caravan Solidarity Run Jobs Fair (local) Jobs Fair (overseas) Launching of GMA Job Center Kiosk	Talisay to 1st Mandaue, Cebu Mandaue City to Lapu-Lapu City Sports Complex Cebu Capitol Social Hall Abellana National School Robinson's Mall, Cebu City
VIII	Motorcade Jobs and Livelihood Fair Wage Productivity Clinic	From Capitol Bldg. to Tacloban City Convention Center Tacloban City Convention Center
IX	Motorcade Jobs Fair	Patalo Barracks to Zamboanga Golf and Country Club Southway Mall, Zamboanga City
X	Jobs Fair	Gaisano and SM Malls, Cagayan de Oro City Malaybalay City Freedom Park
XI	Foot Parade Motorcade Jobs Fair and Career Orientation Launching of GMA Job Center Kiosk	Freedom Park, Roxas Blvd., Davao City Malaybalay City Freedom Park GMall of Davao / GMall Atrium / SM Davao Sangganiang Panglungsod Lobby, Davao City
XII	Medical Mission / Blood Letting Jobs Fair Launching of GMA Job Center Kiosk	Bgy. Sta. Cruz, Koronadal City Protech Center, Koronadal City Smart, Koronadal City
CARAGA	Motorcade Trade and Livelihood Fair / Launching of GMA Job Center Kiosk / Wage Board Meeting	Rizal Park Butuan Badminton Idol and Fitness Center

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

Family of Agencies

Employees Compensation Commission (ECC) • Institute for Labor Studies (ILS) • Maritime Training Council (MTC) • National Conciliation and Mediation Board (NCMB) • National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) • National Maritime Polytechnic (NMP) • National Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC) • Occupational Safety and Health Center (OSHC) • Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) • Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) • Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)

LABANAN ANG KAHIRAPAN

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Vol. 23 No. 143

Wage theory

EDITORIAL

SHORT-TERM IMITATIVES often mark the National celebration of Labor Day. The summarization of benefits and the giving of dates have become part of the standard theater of politics. While we can see through the elaborate staging, we should not begrudge the actual incentives, the parade of packages; every little bit helps, especially at a time of food and fuel inflation. But perhaps we can use this year's anniversary to also think long term.

The climate for a legislated wage hike, as demanded by organized labor and many other civil-society groups (and not a few politicians), has not been this favorable in nearly two decades. The moral argument for it is reinforced daily, in the news headlines and the queues for government subsidized rice.

Economically, it may be another matter. While big business groups like the Employers Confederation of the Philippines and the Makati Business Club have acknowledged the possible need for an increase in the minimum wage, the questions of affordability and sustainability cannot simply be brushed aside.

We should, in fact, take great care, before we grant Congress its legislating a wage increase. Markets remain the best way to determine the right wage; while imperfect, the alternative process where regional wage boards deliberate on wage petitions according to local conditions allows us a greater margin for error. Yet, Congress should step in now and then, in times of serious economic stress. But this is the exception, not the rule.

The government, however, can take the lead in raising salaries through other means. Let's consider a suggestion raised by Dupuis columnist Mahar Mangahas last Saturday: "The government is part of the labor market itself. Its own employees, including the staff of state-owned companies, are a significant 10 percent of the employed work force. Rather than try to dictate on the pricing of the labor market, the government should influence the market by active support of the compensation room of its employees."

In other words, raise the wages of government workers, in order to encourage private enterprises to raise theirs. The Arroyo administration has done this before, and it has just done this again: government workers have been promised a 10-percent wage increase in June.

As expected, many cavemen ranted and this idea.

Mangahas, the economist co-founder of Social Weather Stations, mentions one factor: "the government should protect the real worth of its own employees' salaries, by indexing them to the cost of living."

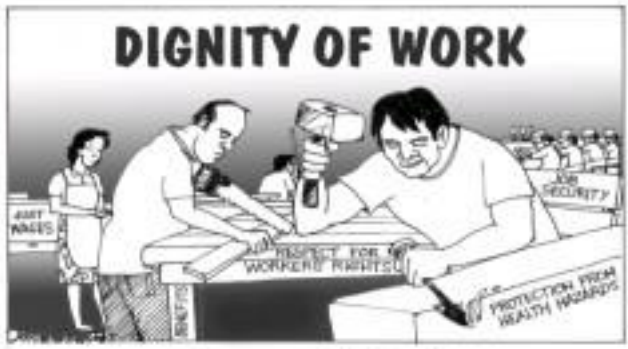
But we must also note that, by most estimates, our government bureaucracy is bloated. We must be able to reduce the number of workers as a whole. (We need more teachers, but do we need more soldiers?)

We realize this idea brings us back to the old debate: Should government workers enjoy similar rates as private sector employees? The argument against has always been based on principle: Serving the public is compensation enough. Public service should be its own reward.

In an ideal world, perhaps. But in the real world, placing people in positions of authority, without a scrupulous regard for what they need to keep body and soul together, discourages the talented and ambitious from working in government, and encourages corruption among those in government.

The counter-argument has always been based on a sense of practicality, but since the 1990s it has also been anchored on the performance of government agencies exempt from salary standardization, such as the Bangko Sentral. Our central bankers are highly regarded at home and overseas—and their high regard is appropriately translated into comparable compensation.

What would happen if, to give only one example, the teachers and researchers trailing away in our national systems of science high schools were to enjoy much higher salaries? We would encourage more of them to stay. More importantly, we would encourage better teaching and better research—and thus better graduates. Think of the possibilities.



New ports of choice?

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

THE RICE AND FUEL CRUNCH MAKE THE headlines and evening news for now. But over the long pull, below the surface shifts in demographic movements and policy will drive more Filipinos and other Asian workers to cities across the region for new jobs.

Asia has now birthed 514.2 million migrants, a University of Sussex study estimates. Half of these were workers, and "the Philippines not the largest number."

Since the mid 1980s, however, growing numbers of migrant have turned inwards, the Asian Development Bank points out. "There is now burgeoning international migration within Asia itself."

Today a Bhutanese worker is more likely to head for New Delhi or a Filipino might fly to Kuala Lumpur, instead of going beyond. Some countries lure migrants to generate numbers to fill domestic jobs. In Malaysia, Hong Kong and Thailand, the proportion of guest workers exceed 6 percent of their labor forces.

"Developing Asia has the potential to reap big gains from easier migration," Lea Sgouraki and Jim Zhai note in the ADB analysis "Asian Workers on the Move." But these gains "will not materialize automatically." Migrants' coupons are a crucial because "in every large number of Asian workers (will be) on the move" to the years ahead.

The average migrant sends home to relatives or to "circular bankers" between $1,000-$2,000 annually. When added up, these "turtles" exceeded $188.3 billion last year—a full third of global aid. Some institutions. That exceeded into developing Asia from Japan, Top recipients were China, India and the Philippines.

A study of 17 countries, over a decade, found that migrant remittances solidified the "poverty headcount ratio by 11 percent in Nepal and 6 percent in Bangladesh. "Overseas funds reduce remittances "time sharply the chances of a Filipino household slumping into poverty," the School of Economics' Ivanna Irenia urges. And World Bank's Claudio Martines and Dean Yang document how neighbors share in fuller cupboards of repaired and repainted guest workers' families.

Between 1995 and 2000, 4 out of every 10 Asian migrant workers sought jobs within the region. "This is quite different from the situation two decades ago," Sussenberg and Zhai write. The bulk of workers traveled outwards to the Middle East, Europe and North America. Geographic, welfare Asia, explain much of this [change]."

The number of elderly people, say in Taipei or Hong Kong, is rising. This picks up demand for caregivers. Between 1995 and 2000, for instance, the yearly outflow of Filipino migrant nurses bolted from 5,747 to 11,323.

Many declines in fertility also occurred. China, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore , Japan and Thailand are working through their "demographic transitions." Their working-age populations will shrink, while those of most South and Southeast Asian countries will expand. "This growing imbalance ... is likely to serve as a powerful engine for intra-regional migration over the next few decades," the report predicts.

"If you have money even the quicks will toss the mills for you," a Chinese proverb says. Disparities in income levels are making some Asian countries' important exporter jobs for labor migrants. "Take a middle-income country like Thailand, for part the income could be 10 times that of neighboring Burma, a low-income labor-sending country.

The ADB study found three major trends reshaping labor migration policies of Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. (a) Ad hoc policies have been replaced by some move to more long-term demand; thus, Singapore has crafted an industry-specific quota system; (b) Entry for skilled workers is facilitated, as the US does; (c) Bilateral agreements to secure cooperation in managing "irregular" migration is multiplying.

Filipinos dub former illegal migrants, who flash immigration cops, "taga ng taga." There are at least 2.4 million these "TNTs," the study says. That's equivalent to six Bicutans.

They are Asia's version of America's "wetbacks." They reveal the institutional weaknesses of the persons' systems. They also unravel there are all around economic gains to be made from more liberal regimes, "the study asserts.

Singapore eliminates first foreign labor contributed 3.5 percentage points to its hefty annual growth rate from 1970 to 1990. Since the inception of South Korea, most labor receiving countries would "gain in terms of real GDP from labor migration liberalization," ADB estimates in its bottle listed.

There are, however, significant caveats. "Migrations native arrest of social issues," the study admits. Besides crumbling, due to long separations from family heads who work abroad, is just one. A country of nannads "may wind up well beyond borders," The New York Times magazine writer Lisa Belkin in their wake.

The study does not factor in consequences from the Middle East's renewed "geological frenzy." The price of oil has gone through the roof—from $26 a barrel in 2003 to a peak of $120 this month. Gulf countries earned $686 billion last year. That's $1 billion more than depressed petrodollars is shining everything in its path. That includes labor pores of choice.

Migrants in some Middle East countries can succeed 80 percent of the workforce. "The nations listed cannot also enjoy profits and pensions that immigrant labor makes possible," the document notes. "But they do not want to face the competition immigrants bring."

"An integrated Asian labor market is not to emerge," the ADB study notes. But the fledgling process is important and liberalizing migration "holds great promise for the future." That promise may not be aborted as oil shuts migration destinations.

(E-mail: juanlmercado@gmail.com)

'Aktibista lang po ako'

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

TODAY IS MAY 1, LABOR DAY, A DAY SUposed for workers. But I'll break tradition a bit by writing not about a worker but about some one who, whose heart beats for the worker, or indeed the factory. I'll break tradition, a bit by writing not about the usual gamut of issues that direct the means let us to replenish our bodies but about someone whose absence should deprive us as an echo to recover our souls.

That someone is Jesus Burgos.

Last Monday, April 28, the Burgos family along with their friends and sympathizers marked the first year of his disappearance. One year had not dimmed their recollection of him—he might as well have been there singing and laughing and swinging here, there and everywhere. Time has not kept him efficiently slow—at the day he was taken away from them, at least physically.

In a special issue of 'Mr Forum, the politician Joe Burgos used to help his constituents reclaim their freedom, his wife, Edelsa, talks about the day they too disappeared, after passing the story together with a little help from friends and witnesses.

"Jesus disappeared. Makikita lang po ako' (I'm just an activist) several times, addressing his plea to the audience who became not ruthless, then to the talents who were there at the restaurant. I forgot to mention it: Eric Gutierrez, Commissioner Purita Ilas—[the talented] both the writers were timid, she said. His eyes were asking for help, and I came forward because my conscience is bothering me that I was not able to help him [at that time].

"Jesus disappeared several times in four years and received a dragged him. The statements were full of calumnies. It was monotone. Jesus was alone and unarmed. No one helped him. No one lifted a finger . . . Those are the signs of the times. We stand by the safety of our citizens and allow an injustice and a crime to be carried out."

It's a cry that pierces the heart—for those who still have hearts to pierce. If you are a parent and have known fear and trembling when your teenage son or daughter has not come home past the watching hour and you cannot go through it then, magnify that a thousand times and you'll know—it have no idea, since you can never really know without being in that situation—to what extent Jesus' mother and siblings have been this past year. Edelsa's words are an indictment of this country. Edelsa's words are an indictment of us.

And shortly so. We have not just wrestled and kept our silence while the shadows were seized from their midst. We have not just looked away by and kept our distance while Edelsa and her family struggled to shed light on the darkness.

Some of us are bound to comfort ourselves with the thought that we can afford to shirk away. Jesus was neither teenage nor found a life of power and years. True, he was not always by their very reason, he deserves more from us. Jesus was not a journalist like his father, but he was an activist like his father. He was someone who, like his father, turned in a life of farming and devoted his energies to helping make the life of his fellow farmers a little bit better. He was someone who, like his father, was not afraid to speak truth to power. Jesus, he would not even be facing the specter of hunger, he was not like the hordes of ordinary persons, he deserves our outrage against those that wrecked it. In fact, he deserves more than us.

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JDV busy with public speaking engagements abroad

SOME FRIENDS OF FORMER SPEAKER JOSE de Venecia got together with him and his wife Gina last week, as some of us hadn't seen them for almost a while and we had time—nothing to do—to blow without the trappings of the post he held for so long and just a plain representative from Pangasinan. JDV has put on a lot of weight and looks relaxed, without the lines on his face during those years when he was the top man in the country. Even the speakership that he held for an unprecedented fifth term last February. With a laugh, he said he now gets more invitations to speak abroad, all expenses paid. Clearly his prestige abroad remains undiminished by the reversal of his political fortunes. Talk of the prophet not being appreciated in his own country, someone remarked.

* * *

JDV, who was recently elected president emeritus of Lakas-CMD (replacing as president by new Speaker Prospero Nograles) and who regained former Vice Prime Minister Shokichi Mikuniwaki as chair of the Christian-Democrat International for Asia-Pacific, now in Manila, Dakuan, last March 28 to attend that International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP). From there he was invited by the Korean Parliament, ICAPP and the World Peace Federation. A few days later, he addressed a conference in Doha, Qatar. In the company of other leaders like Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, former French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, and former US Defense Secretary Bill Cohen, Wess Dakuz, JDV proceeded, after Doha, to Istanbul, Turkey, where he was the keynote in Capetown, South Africa, as a delegate to the Inter-Parliamentary Union. After the IPU conference, the De Venecias and a Filipina-Chinese couple managed to do a three-day safari in SA's wild life park. "We had the time of our lives. Jed (Gina's nickname) being like a child again, watching all the animals in the wild). At the moment, he's in Washington, D.C., where he is the only Asian to speak on the integration of South and East Asia, after which he will go to Texas for the inauguration of the library of former President George H. W. Bush. Now, May 14-16, 2008, JDV travels to Moscow at the

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Rinlinda Obviador-Canuyan

invitation of the Russian government for a conference on consolidating energy.

What a life! Retirement is not for him, just he said he'll be filing a counterpart resolution in the House on the senators' resolution calling for charter change via a constituent assembly to adopt federalism. I detected no bitterness about how the Senate had blocked his efforts over and a half ago to push Cha-cha via the same mode. Instead there's the old twinkle in his eyes about "who knows where the Cha-cha road would lead us." That's JDV, the unsinkable, the eternal optimist.

* * *

After dwelling for two weeks on the rise issue with Governors Peter Favila and Amihan Sap, Cocoy dreams and I like travel to our hometown meeting JDHS program the highly successful visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the United States. He was invited by Emmanuel "Boss" Villanueva, LL, who recently assumed the job of director of the Jewish Community Relations Foundation, to join our dialogue on the Pope's visit and what it means for the predominantly Catholic Church. He agreed that this debut of the somewhat shy Benedict XVI on the world stage must have been difficult for him, coming after my celebrity Pope John Paul II, a great communicator who served the longest on Peter's throne. But the Pope, now 81, has come into his own and he too with flying colors and his unswerving and his powerhouse intellect drove us he tackled one issues in his typically German manner, straight and without frills.

* * *

I left a lump in my throat as I watched the Pope's unprecedented welcome from President and Mrs. George Bush at the White House, with

No to FIELDS of hybrid rice

HYBRID DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN MORE and better.

During this time when a global food crisis is upon us and the world's impoverished population are due to deal with hunger, a variety of solutions have been floated upon us. So, the questions regarding the soundness of some of these solutions have to be raised.

The presidential flat on the implementation of FIELDS (Farmer Industrialization Effectivity Livelihood Security Groups), among them, Cambo Saka, concerned and alarmed over the aggressive promotion of hybrid rice. Cesario Saka is a policy research and advocacy non-government organization based in Quezon City and Cambo Saka Farmers Council, a loose coalition of small farmers' organization nationwide formed in 2003 during the National Rice Farmers Summit.

FIELDS stands for fertilizers, irrigation and subsidy of infrastructure, extension and education, loans, drugs and post-harvest facilities and seeds.

While the multi-billion additional funding for this controversial effort comes in a recession-developments, Cesario Saka disagrees with how the government plans to use the P15.06 billion. It underscores that the government intends to continue the hard sales demand to hybrid rice production, with an allocation of P7.7 billion until 2010.

"We find this difficult to understand given the poor performance of the hybrid rice program and the many issues that have been raised against it over the years," said Cesario Saka executive director Jose Bonifacio Jr. and National Rice Farmers Council president Jimmy Tadeo.

Cesario Saka says that as it is currently designed, the P43.7-billion package of intervention measures will merely perpetuate the misguided strategies that have turned the Philippines into the world's biggest rice importer. In subsidizing hybrid rice, the Philippines would be subsidizing seed companies like IL-Agrotech, including multinationals like Bayer and Monsanto, when

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Cleofe F. Dayo

the money could be used to support our own rice farmers. The design of the FIELDS intervention will actually make the rice program dependent on foreign companies with no accountability to the public.

Cesario Saka says it outright: "Typically, declaring a hybrid rice's insane reliance on chemical based inputs to reach optimum yields with the desired yielding potential of inorganic fertilizer is more stand at P1,700, hybrid rice production will only force rice farmers deeper into indebtedness, even as the big fertilizer companies reap windfalls of profit. All of this, plus the damage to the environment from chemical-based farming, as shown in numerous studies, will certainly come.

When will we ever learn? Cesario Saka asks. The perverse crisis is clear evidence that the old answer of putting all eggs in one basket, i.e., dumping the Green Revolution into the Philippines, especially the Green Revolution into the Philippines, especially and flawed hybrid rice program was a huge mistake. Indeed, Cesario Saka adds, the contribution of the hybrid rice, which has received billions of pesos in government support, pales in comparison with the over 50 percent contribution of good native varieties. Even then, hybrid rice failed to receive support from government. And yet down in all this talk of increasing funding for rice hybridization.

The government's only rationale for inserting on hybrid rice is the supposed higher yield advantage when compared with traditional and other inbred varieties. But this is not really the case. In the field, farmer-selected and bred seeds have been shown to be competitive if not superior in hybrid rice which has an average yield of less than 7 metric tons per hectare.

Read this: According to some studies, yields from good, well-managed and optimally fertilized inbred varieties of 9 mt/ha and 10 mt/ha respectively. Using the latest rice hectarage of 4,272,885 hectares, we can assume that the country can produce as much as 38,445,000 million metric tons of palay or 25,296,000 metric tons of milled rice, using only good seeds. This is even assuming a low milling recovery of only 66 percent."

Here's more: "Actual field experience with farmer developed varieties also show that yields of up to 7 mt/ha, as witnessed by the small rice farmers themselves. The company favorable to the less than 6 mt/ha, average yield for hybrid rice. Rice farmers who employed the system of rice intensification managed to produced yields much as high as 9 mt/ha. Moreover, the small rice farmers have been reporting milling recovery rates of 70 percent which is significantly more than that registered by hybrid rice. What is even more notable is that the small rice farmers were able to achieve this level of performance without chemical inputs, using instead only organic fertilizer and pest support. Strongly government has not tapped the expertise of these organic rice farmers so far."

So Cambo Saka argues that by simply providing farmers with good quality seeds, specifically the traditional and farmer-developed varieties, promoting organic rice farming and constructing additional irrigation facilities, government could set the country on the road to self-sufficiency in basic food grains. So it is best that government should refrain from current policy of relying on hybrid rice and imposing rice as solutions to the food crisis. In mind, government should pursue the implementation of The Rice Master Plan that the inked rice farmers have helped to formulate.

That's more than just food for thought.

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Senate swindled?

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

behind the Diamond resolution, the Palace pushed the idea, claiming it's not interested in charter change but in allowing the Palace to simply waiving and ratifying around for any opposition that may fall into its lap. But not on the Senate's terms.

Most electoral cycle is it paranoid? Which can't help but wonder, though, if the Senate hasn't been taken for a ride, and the possibility that Pimentel has sold out to the Palace has even been raised. But Pimentel's believable credentials are impeccable, his reputation as an elder statesman not previous, his son's entering the Senate and Edsa being compelled (possibly by the end of this year) too prohibit, he has more on the line along with President Benigno Aquino at this time.

What Pimentel has done is put federalism back on the table, because there is no national resistance on the proposal yet. The Senate resolution of Diamond is nonbinding, as members of the House but nothing at all with the President or to the proponents of a shift to the parliamentary system, who received a thumping from public opinion in December of 2006.

If a constituent assembly is said to have emerged from the failed charter change efforts of former Speaker Jose de Venecia, it's that the public won't budge from directly electing the chief executive (and by extension, it appears, by any other that might entail). It appears in any scheme that might entail the abolition of the Presidency or give, for a new post-2010 time on political life).

Pangilinan has said he views the Diamond proposal as calling quorum (not that any constitutional amendments should take effect only after 2010 and the amendments should only arise from the deliberations of a constitutional convention. Aquino has expressed similar reservations. And election is more interested in election-nonsense than in proposals to amend the Constitution.

That leaves the Diamond resolution as considered a trial balloon to give the President emergency powers to deal with the distribution of rice, now the proposals made by some of its members immediately shot down by the public. It hasn't even been voted on by the Senate as a whole, let alone passed. There's really nothing to it by them, and its members are more interested in poring over the latest casino data to engineer the creation of new congressional districts in time for 2010.

The Diamond resolution, for just as the tapping off the Pimentel proposal, is trying to rebut the appointment of Congress by summoning an executive Cabinet secretary to it in the offing. This is delightful news for Congress because it means the Cabinet secretary in question will have the added benefit to attend and deal with her so that she can get her appointment through the bicameral body's confirmation process. Or as they think because, really, whether Congress likes it or not, the President has powers that it cannot take away, and Congress can't "Congress" say but here. If there don't like it, she'll suspended them all the way to 2010.

Which only serves to underscore Cayetano's stand, that the Senate proposal was a gambit to put federalism back on the table. Which is why Cayetano's hard put to call the Senate's bluff by naming proponents of its own, because then it'd call a freeze of the proposals that helped destroy De Venecia—something Speaker Prospero Nograles doesn't want to see happen.

Since the Senate has put federalism back on the table, revisiting the issue will be useful. At present, the concept of federalism is still too alien and obscure for the public at large to really get excited about it, or to reject it. Which is why it's important to get the idea of federalism out there, understanding the idea to the public will help focus attention on the many proposals being put forward to improve our political system and foster development and democratization in the country.

'Teleserye'

A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO, I WAS STUCK IN THE AIRPORT because my flight was delayed. I had nothing to do so I watched the television being shown at the waiting lounge. I hadn't watched these things for ages, and the first thing I noticed was that nothing had changed. The stars were still the beautiful young girl who was bullied (broken leg, fatigue) and a handsome—spotless—millionaire by her kindness, purity and meekness. The evil villain was a rich and sophisticated woman, wielding control over everything and everyone. Hairdos were ruled by powerful families. Policemen and other law enforcers were incapable of ordering crime. People got evils—some found out that they were the sons/daughters of a dying millionaire, not because of hard work or of entrepreneurial flair.

That experience was less than exhilarating. Media is a powerful tool for the dissemination of ideas, and the things I saw listed are definitely not what we want to teach our people. I dislike teleseryes for these main reasons: they are unrealistic, they promote the wrong attitudes and values among the masses; second, they reinforce already deleterious social institutions that are here; third, they are counterproductive modes of empowerment.

The biggest sense of unreality is often a beautiful girl, meek and obedient. This is the "ideal" that producers want to communicate to the audience.

The problem is that this Maria Clara "ideal" is both unpractical and outdated. A Maria Clara would have been a treasure five decades ago, but she is obsolete now. For a girl to succeed today, she has to be an independent thinker, an active, smart, resourceful and creative. These qualities are missing from the teleserye lists, for the same qualities are the ingredients to a teleserye success story. The lists give the man of her dreams, becomes financially well-off, and makes friends with the rest of the cast, and so on. And the audiences watch to assure themselves that the "good" will have a happy ending, which of course very rarely happens in real life.

Among the wrong attitudes and values promoted by teleseryes is that rich people are "greedy" and "evil." They are the ones who sit around all day, dreaming about their inheritance or plotting against the body. They speak broken English ("Because strongly Filipino is corny for the audience") and they are demeaned as the ones whom they are at home. Their families are frequently defective and their morals generally low.

There are many things wrong with this picture, but let me just focus on one: rich people are portrayed as lazy individuals, whose only claim to greatness is their money. Now, there are a lot of them who lead lives of leisure because their money essentially works for them. But most of them are highly dynamic, entrepreneurial and hardworking individuals. They are active and full of enthusiasm for what they do.

Sadly, this is not what teleseryes teach their audiences. What they say is that since you are rich, you can sit around and enjoy for the rest of your life. Then, as such, you will never be successful if this is your paradigm.

Another thing I hate is the common concept of success: it is winning a singing contest, having a popular actor/actress, most of all, getting the "man of your dreams" (with high probability that most being rich, that solving most of life's problems). Success is not winning a singing contest or becoming an actor/actress. It is never having one's paper published in a well-known academic journal or developing a new technology to assist the Filipino environment. It is never an opportunity as an economic planner for the country or becoming a reputable software developer. I have so many complaints about the distorted values that these shows promote, but I'll just stop here. Otherwise, I'll end up writing about nothing but a chance at the spotlight. Guess who gives them those ideas?

In teleseryes, public officials are corrupt. Investors, entrepreneurs, lawyers and barangay captains accept bribes and are frequently cronies of the rich.

On the one hand, this is to reinforce the view that our government is corrupt! That fans can be here by those who have money! I don't want the Filipino people to believe that all our institutions are ineffective and rotten. I don't want people to see how fans are broken over and over again because they are not supposed to be broken. People who break laws should be punished. Corruption should be rooted out many evils it becomes a reliance but the money or the influence to get him out of the mess.

I would also like to ask why in these teleseryes crimes are never solved by the police, but by private individuals without an official mandate. Law enforcement is supposed to be a serious business and crimes should be solved by the police! Law enforcement should be carried out by the appropriate authorities, not by people to take the law into their own hands.

Teleseryes also love to show powerful families controlling the lives of people. These families are stuck in their backwardness and they are portrayed as relics like the aristocrats of the last century. It is a very unethical kind of opinion where the state and the government are almost meaningless because real power rests in the hands of the wealthy.

Also, in this semi-feudal set-up, social mobility is very slow or non-existent. Individual progress is not attained unless someone from the upper class takes pity on you. Sometimes, feudalism is changing in our country, which is why people must not be brainwashed into believing that they are destined to remain where they are. Social mobility is a key idea in our present economic model and it should be promoted. There are so many chances in the globalizing Philippine economy for people to advance in their chosen fields.

When people watch teleseryes, they are transfixed, their minds and emotions inactive. They focus on the life of several fictional characters, completely forgetting real life. Personal development is overlooked, hobbies are ignored, goals are thrown out the window. No one will get anywhere if all he does is work, watch teleseryes and sleep. Life is too short to waste on such things. It will be right to enjoy these shows, but we should never fall captive to them (which is what it happening).

I don't think teleseryes are bad by themselves. What's wrong are the values that are promoted. Filipinos ought to become smarter and discerning. These shows address real issues of Filipinos! I hope we will learn to use them well.

Kristy Anne Abello, 21, has a BS Business Administration degree from the University of the Philippines in Diliman and works as a systems analyst.

YOUNG BLOOD

Kristy Anne Abello

We seem to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the youngsters and beyond. —Ed.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

IS deserves to be included in programs meant to help masses

THE WORKING MASSES URGENTLY need all the support to be able to cope with the rising prices of basic commodities, especially food. The current food crisis has brought this need to the fore.

In response, the government talks about giving workers wage hikes, tax breaks and other benefits. These are good but who will take care of the needs of the 25 million workers in the informal sector (IS)? Such incentives are irrelevant to them. They are not covered by most labor laws, including the minimum wage law. And the majority is much poorer than wage earners.

IS workers include vendors, small farmers, fishers/fish farms based workers, drivers, construction workers, and government volunteers. The sector is the catch basin of those displaced from formal work or have no other choice but to create their own livelihood. These workers need the support most.

IS workers constitute almost half of the country's GDP. So, they:

- are barely covered by social security and health services;
- do not rest regularly;
- are often exploited by employers;
- suffer working conditions not subject to labor standards;
- are often exposed to occupational safety and health hazards;
- have minimal access to productive resources; and
- during this critical time, are not even considered in proposals meant to help workers.

It is as if they do not exist.

To make government initiatives effective in helping the poor, the needs of the 25 million IS workers cannot be ignored.

House Bill 3555, or the bill titled "An Act Providing for a Magna Carta for Workers in the Informal Economy," (spending in the House of Representatives' Committee on Labor. This bill responds to the needs of IS workers by:

- making them visible through a simple standard registration system and inclusion of information on them in government database;
- making available a comprehensive package of programs including: Philhealth, SSS and GSIS coverage (the government subsidizes); re-experienced skills enhancement programs, credit facilities; and organizing support;
- developing standards in areas of wages, conditions of work and benefits;
- improving their participation in government bodies; and
- ensuring government offices to develop and implement programs for them.

The passage of HB 3555 into law is, therefore, crucial.

We call on:

- President Macapagal-Arroyo to certify HB 3555 as urgent, to pressure Congress to act on the bill;
- the House labor committee to start deliberations on it;
- concerned senators to file a similar bill in Senate; and
- our legislators to immediately pass the bill into law.

Protecting the welfare of all workers is a government responsibility. So is ensuring their capability to stop during this critical time. Congress and the Executive have the power to do both these tasks.

—Elizabeth Angsioco
National Chairperson
Bonifacio Ilagan
Secretary-Treasurer
Partners of the Philippines
dcarpi@uwp.org.ph
angsioco@yahoo.com

FREE lugaw (rice porridge) being served to poor kids.

Aussie's suggestions doable, show heart for Pinoys

I ADMIRE THE SUGGESTIONS GIVEN BY MR. Bevan Ramsden, an Australian married to a Filipina. (Inquirer, 4/23/08) This means I would say, is more of a Filipino than the full-blooded Filipinos who are callous to the plight of our hapless countrymen suffering from the ground of no branches. His suggestions to resolve the present rice crisis, though simple, seems doable and practical. But they can be effected only if they are pursued seriously by the government. I hope the authorities will consider Ramsdens' suggestions instead of using the rice crisis as a platform for political grandstanding.

—GENER BARCENA
Jubail Industrial City, KSA
glmonarcha@yahoo.com.ph

Rice crisis media's fault

COME TO THINK OF IT, THE CURRENT RICE crisis that we have could be partly blamed on media. Why? For the past two weeks or so, the crisis has always been front page of newspapers and on radio/TV newscasts, and discussed roughly by both print and broadcast columnists, etc. Thus, the people are scared and started queuing up for the scarce NFA rice.

I remember some years ago at the height of the SARS cases (plagued up by media too), I came across saying this eye-opener in a TV interview: "I am just perplexed at the big fuss about SARS when by casualty is not even two-digit (less than 10). What media should concentrate on is tuberculosis which claims thousands of lives each year."

—PAUL R. MORTEL, RRLA Court,
Balanday, Marikina City

Rice crisis just meant to be political diversion

THE "RICE CRISIS" THAT'S STIRRING US in the face right now is real yet so big as the government would want us to believe. The administration is simply using it to divert public focus from the real issues: the legitimacy of President Macapagal-Arroyo's stay in Malacañang and the massive corruption in high government offices.

But make no mistake about it. In a couple of years, the rice problem shall have become small. Many crisis affecting not just the rice producers but the whole agricultural sector as well. Thanks to the doomed agricultural policies of this administration as well as the massive corruption in government that has depleted the agricultural sector of much-needed support. Not to mention the many times farmers were used to divert or steal funds allocated for agriculture (e.g., the bus fertilizer, irrigation and some funds) to other non-agricultural projects, which are wrong, but benefit politicians.

In connection of this is Even President Macapagal-Arroyo and her agriculture officials will solve this looming crisis (when changes/corrections are immediately adopted. The Philippines should now move away from its dependence on imports for food. All-out support and help should be extended to farmers. A genuine land reform program should be pursued and the large-scale conversion of arable lands into non-agricultural assets should be stopped. Unless these are done and government corruption goes on, the continuing "rice crisis" will worsen and a food riot is not far fetched.

—ERIC GARCIA,
spokesperson, Bayanpora,
bayanpora@yahoo

Nothing final in SIA, Ad Verbum deal

WE WISH TO CLARIFY THE ITEM ON AD Buzz (Inquirer, 4/23/08) regarding Singapore Airlines and Ad Verbum PR Inc.

While it is true there are discussions going on, these are yet nothing final as other parties are still involved in this process. It is unfortunate that the item implied that the process has already been completed.

—ANTONIO LAMBIN,
chairman, AD Verbum PR Inc.
for affiliate Company of MAS Philippines Inc.

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Across the NATION

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Army air strikes defeat peace zone agreement signed in Jolo

Gov't tagged responsible for pullout of Malaysians

ZAMBOANGA CITY—GOVERNMENT FORCES launched air strikes on suspected terrorist bases near Jolo, breaking a brief episode of silence that came with the signing by military, Church and civilian leaders of a pact declaring the capital a zone of peace about a week ago.

Maj. Eugene Basara, spokesperson of the Western Mindanao Command, said the air strikes in Indanan, Jolo, were part of Task Force Comet's operations against Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) members who were seen with Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members in the area.

The task force was formed to pursue terrorists.

"It was the call of the ground commanders because the troops are dealing with ASG and JI members in a jungle with breathtaking facility," Basara said.

Basara, quoting reports from task force commander Brig. Gen. Juancho Sabban, said the shelling, which started at 10 p.m. on Tuesday and ended 4 a.m. yesterday, was meant to "surgical strike" to prevent the terrorists from regrouping and launching more attacks.

No casualties were reported, however, although some residents were just a kilometer from the targets.

Senior Supt. Juliarito Rasing, Jolo police chief, said the bombardment could be heard in Jolo. He could not say if some residents were displaced.

Ansari Abdulmajik, chief of the provincial area coordinating center, said her staff was on its way to the area to check if there were evacuees.

Christopher Lee, a social worker based in Indanan, said families who had returned to their villages would again be displaced by the bombardment. He was referring to more than 200 families in Barangay Kagay who were moved because of on-and-off military operations in Indanan.

Prof. Octavio Dinampo, chief executive officer of the Nur Misuari Lupah Bay who first reported the air strikes, said the signing of an agreement making Jolo a zone of peace was being vetoed by one of its signatories, the military.

"It's not all over again; hate alone last night. With a US spy plane flying since last night, two attack helicopters and two Scan-eyed bombers, coupled with heavy shellings, this is not surgical operations, it's an overkill," Dinampo said.

The zone of peace covers Jolo and extends to a 40-meter radius in the boundaries of Indanan, Talipao and Patikul towns. Julia S. Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao

Vice gov asks SC to bar poll exec from Ermita son case

LEYTE CITY—LAWYERS OF VICE Gov Mark Levitre have filed a petition asking the Supreme Court to issue a temporary restraining order (TRO) to disqualify Elections Commissioner Moslemen Macarambon from participating in the hearing of the electoral protest filed by rival Roberto Ermita, son of Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

In an April 22 petition, a copy of which was obtained by the Inquirer, the Levitre camp claimed that Macarambon's nomination as commissioner had not been confirmed by the Commission on Appointments.

"It is the office of executive secretary that will release Macarambon's appointment and since the electoral protest involves his son, Olivarez, then Macarambon, out of delicadeza, should inhibit," Levitre's lawyer Pete Quiaoit said in a phone interview.

On March 28, Macarambon issued an order denying the motion filed by Levitre's lawyers asking him to inhibit from the case.

Quiaoit said the Levitre camp was hoping that, for fairness and considering the circumstances that the case "involves the son of the executive secretary," the high court would issue a temporary restraining order to disqualify Macarambon from hearing the protest.

Marlon Alexander Juairo, Inquirer Southern Luzon

NEWSBRIEFS

■ TACLOBAN CITY

Jailed OFW's wife seeks gov't help

THE WIFE of an overseas Filipino worker sought government help for her husband who was imprisoned in Saudi Arabia for running in another employer.

Sherilla Cabardo went to the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration in Tacloban City on Tuesday and pleaded for help for her husband, Bonjie.

Georgeman asked for translation of a police complaint against him without knowing his contract with his previous employer. Joy A. Cabiles, Inquirer Visayas

P13M in bonuses allotted for workers

THE TACLOBAN City government will pay up to P13 million in bonuses to its more than 1,500 workers.

Mayor Bricio Petilla, in announcing the bonus, said the P2,000 productivity bonus had already been released to more than 700 regular and 600 casual employees. Some P1.7 million has been allocated for the bonus. Joy A. Cabiles, Inquirer Visayas

■ CALAMBA CITY

German jailed for kidnapping

POLICE arrested a German suspected of kidnapping a 15-year-old girl in Sta. Cruz, Laguna, on Monday.

Supt. Frederick Maul, Sta. Cruz police chief, said police rescued the daughter of Christian Rudolf Walter Nowack in Barangay Bubat after neighbors reported the presence of the kidnapped girl there.

But Maul quoted Thorsten as saying the case was viewed as a retaliation from Thorsten's Filipina wife, after their grandparents, because Thorsten had a relationship with the girl, who served as Thorsten's maid.

Alita Catherine Cahigh, Inquirer Southern Luzon

■ DAGUPAN CITY

5 rob suspects slain by cops

FIVE robbery suspects were killed in a clash with policemen in Mangaldan, Pangasinan, yesterday. Senior Supt. Rogelio Nisnisan, provincial police director, said:

Only four of the suspects have been identified, based on ID cards and documents that policemen recovered from the car. Nisnisan said they were Joseph Cabez of Pandapaan City; Agripino Abadon of Bayson City; Dondon Labrie of Real, Dasmari, and Santiago Sangaya of Bantay.

The suspects died while being taken to the Bayambang District Hospital, he said. A sixth suspect fled.

Gabriel Cardenas, Inquirer Northern Luzon

■ PANGLAO, BOHOL

Execs revive calls for justice for girl

PANGLAO officials have revived calls for justice for the rape-killing of a 17-year-old girl four years ago, allegedly by her uncle, former mayor Dr. Dominick Damalerio.

Vice Mayor Pedro Fuentes and four councilors stressed up on April 27 at the St. Augustine Parish Church where Mara was laid to commemorate the fourth death anniversary of the victim.

Charges have been filed against Damalerio and three others, including his brother, Teodoro, alias "Pingping." Six others the victim worked as house help before she was raped and killed.

Damalerio has denied the charges.

Ed Dagupo and Dale A. Pareño, Inquirer Visayas

■ COTABATO CITY

New attacks on buses put cops on alert

POLICE in Midsayap, North Cotabato, have been on heightened alert following Saturday's bomb attack against a bus there.

Town police chief Supt. Elmer Manribusan said investigators were looking at rebellion and terrorism as likely motives in the bomb attack that damaged three units of Weena Bus Line.

Despite the attacks, Weena Bus Lines decided to continue its operations.

Edwin O. Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao

■ ILOILO CITY

Diarrhea downs 38 inmates in Pototan

DIARRHEA on Tuesday downed 38 inmates of the Iloilo Rehabilitation Center (IRC), in Pototan, Iloilo, or nearly one-fifth of the population, Supt. Filiberto de la Paz said.

De la Paz, who is also acting IRC warden, said doctors were sent to the jail to provide treatment to inmates.

Nestor F. Burgos Jr., Inquirer Visayas

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

'People will learn what they will miss when destruction of the birds' habitat continues'

Color-blind lensman shares wonders of the wild

A RARE indigo-banded kingfisher, a Philippine endemic bird species, in photo taken in Tiaong, Quezon.

By Marlon Ciaco
Jose Pablo City

LOOKING BEYOND WHAT THE EYES CAN see was one thing photographer Remy Ocon imparted during the Earth Day celebration in Lagunas on April 22. Apart from taking on the challenge of shooting wild birds with his camera, he is also struggling with color-blindness.

Ocon, 43, was born with the disability. He recalls how he used to wear colored socks to school, thinking that they were white. "My teachers thought I was simply stubborn but was following their instructions," he said.

Although he can recognize a set of colors, he has difficulty distinguishing shades, as in blue from violet. "It became a problem when I indulged in photography," he said.

The condition became even more of a disadvantage for the photographer of birds since the feathered creatures are usually identified by their plumage.

To ensure that his shots are accurate, Ocon uses the white or color balance available in digital cameras, a feature that adjusts primary colors in an image to produce the correct neutral colors. "If you are able to get your white correctly (during image processing), all the other colors will follow," he added.

Ocon's 11-year-old son Romeo, who is starting to go into "birding" or bird photography as well, plays a big role in his photo-runs. Ocon would ask the boy to look at the raw photographs and compare them with images in books and plates.

"He is very good with colors. In fact, I call him my color-translator," Ocon said. From clement, fallen and rare would enhance the colors accordingly while processing the images.

Caught on cam

Just like any other bird lover, Ocon used to shoot birds with an air rifle. But his passion for photography led him to realize the challenge of shooting birds with perfect timing and appropriate angle and light—without harming the subject.

"Bird photography can be shared through various media such that people will learn what they will miss when destruction of the birds' habitat continues," he said.

In 2006, Ocon decided to retire from the family's business to concentrate on birds so he could concentrate on bird photography. His first major exhibit was the Earth Day celebration of local and national artists at Ilaima Salud restaurant in San Pablo City recently.

Ocon's photography have been displayed online at different Philippine bird forums and at his own blog, etc. His search for wild birds has brought him to places as diverse as Palawan, the Cordilleras, Davao, Central Luzon, Subic and Laguna.

His shot of a stripe-headed Rhabdornis (Rhabdornis mysticalis) in February 2006 made it in the Handbook of the Birds of the World, an international ornithological series on all birds produced in Spain. Taken at the Subic rainforest in Zambales, it was deemed one of the rare times the bird was "captured" by the lens in its natural habitat.

Tip of the iceberg

Of the 614 bird species in the Philippines, 195 are endemic, Ocon said. He has been able to photograph 202 of the species, but he said he was only "barely able to touch the surface."

He identifies the birds as residents or those staying for the breeding season, migrants or those seasonally moving to other locations for favorable conditions, and accidents or those native to the land, which he is most interested in.

Apart from their plumage, Ocon is able to appreciate how birds survive naturally in the Philippines from the time they are hatched until they mature. Bird photography makes him realize how privileged humans are with all the amenities in the world.

"Birds are an indicator of the environment's quality. They look for two things—food and safety," he said. The presence of birds indicates habitat, forests and water systems, he added.

At present, over 30 percent of the Philippine bird species are globally threatened. Only around 500 pairs of the Philippine monkey-eating eagle are left, as of Ocon's last count.

He remembered his son asking him why illegal hunters are not ashamed of what they are doing. The words somehow hits that he wished to go to that level when people would stop harming the environment not because it was illegal but because they would be ashamed to do so.

"If people will see what they will lose, they might start taking action," Ocon said. He hopes to raise the people's awareness on the need to preserve the birds' habitats in much the same way that his subjects are

PHOTOGRAPHER Remy Ocon shown in Mt. Samat, Bataan, in early 2006.

A FLOCK of Common Redshank (Tringa totanus) and Common Greenshank (Tringa nebularia) in photo taken in South Lagoon in Lan Pilas City.

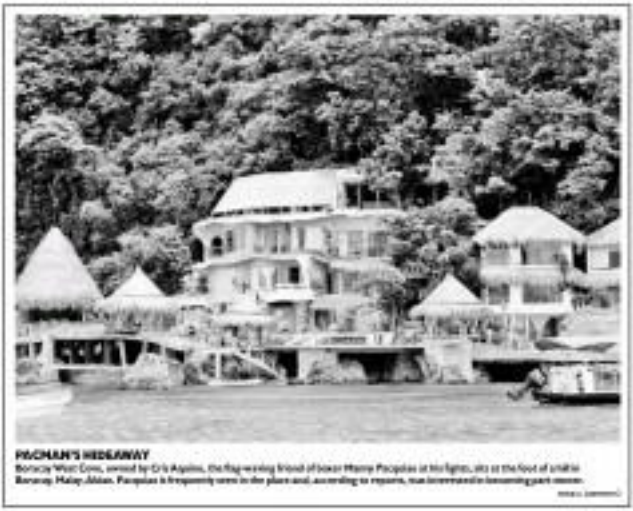
TWO Brahminy Kite (Haliastur indus) birds shown in photo taken in Bonnaky, Pangasinan.

STRIPE-HEADED Rhabdornis (Rhabdornis mysticalis)

able to soar to new heights.

(Remy Ocon's Gallery may be viewed at http://remyocon.blogspot.com)

COLLARED kingfisher (Todiramphus chloris)



PAGMAN'S HIDEAWAY
Boracay West Cove, owned by Cris Aquino, the flag-waving friend of boxer Manny Pacquiao at his fights, sits at the foot of a hill in Boracay. Malay, Aklan. Pacquiao is frequently seen in the place and, according to reports, was interested in becoming a part owner.

Resort manager sought in probe of murder flees

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY— THE manager of the exclusive island resort of Amanpulo, who was linked to a murder-coverup case filed by the Philippine National Police, has left the country for good, according to investigators working on the case.

Portuguese Miguel Guedes de Sousa, who was charged with eight others in the alleged coverup of the suspected murder of seventeen-year-old Rudolfo Abanes in January, left the country on April 12 after police filed the case at the provincial prosecutor's office.

Manila's grand worker employed by Enrell Developers, died in the workers' barracks of Amanpulo after New Year.

Resort officials claimed they found Abanes's body already decomposing and that he had died of natural causes, a claim that was belied later by police investigators.

Murder, obstruction of justice and illegal transfer of a dead person were then filed against De Sousa and several others.

De Sousa's departure left the provincial prosecutor in a bind.

This developed as the wife of Abanes disclosed that she was pressured by resort representatives on Saturday to issue an affidavit stating that she was no longer interested in filing a claim with the resort over the death of her husband.

"They brought me to the provincial fiscal who was in Manila and told me that I must bring someone, and it turned out it was not true. They wanted me to drop my complaint," Abanes said in Filipino.

Emmy Hallen, an official of Seven Seas Resort Inc., which owns Amanpulo, said in an e-mail that controversy Enrell and Abanes's widow had been negotiating for a settlement. This was, however, denied by the widow.

"They have not offered me anything," she said.

Sources in the tourism community in Palawan claimed that De Sousa was sacked by Amanpulo management for mishandling the incident.

The business tried to get an official statement from Amanpulo through e-mail and text messaging, but received no response.

De Sousa was suspected to be responsible for ordering the transfer of Abanes's body out of the resort without health and sanitary certificates and without letting the local police conduct an investigation.

A hold departure order was sought against De Sousa, but chief provincial prosecutor Allen Siros Rodriguez said he decided not to pursue it when company lawyers promised that De Sousa would be present in the investigation.

Amanpulo has enabled investigators and allowed its Filipino employees to deal with investigators, according to police sources.

Rodriguez told the Inquirer on Wednesday that pieces of evidence were still being evaluated.

The Seven Seas Resort has insisted that De Sousa and the management of Amanpulo had nothing to do with Abanes's case and was not involved in any decision on the disposition of the body.

The claims were, however, belied earlier by investigators and Cayo mayor Teodoro Villagracia, who said De Sousa was directly in command of all facilities on the island during Abanes's death. Redempto Anda, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Climate change: N. Cotabato towns in calamity state

COTABATO CITY—THE PROvincial board of North Cotabato has declared six towns in the first district in a state of calamity after floods, spawned by three days of rain, struck the area producing areas.

Some 1,000 families have been displaced, social welfare and agriculture officials said.

More than 8,500 hectares of agricultural lands planted with rice, corn and vegetables have been damaged.

Agriculture officials placed the cost of damage at about P50 million.

The towns were Pigcawayan, Alamada, Libungan, Midsayap, Aleosan and Pikit, collectively known as the Patria Alliance.

The alliance, an association of local governments units that pooled resources in helping one another in infrastructure development, was recently recognized by the government through its Galing Pook Awards.

Since Monday, the provincial social welfare and development office has been distributing hundreds of sacks of rice to the displaced families.

Virgilio Gallanosa, provincial social welfare officer, said calamity funds had already been allotted.

The worst hit town was Pigcawayan with at least 10 percent of its more than 30 villages flooded since Friday.

Pigcawayan is one of the rice granaries in North Cotabato. It also serves as a catch basin for flood waters from Alamada and Bukidnon in Bukidnon province.

Due to continued rains, evacuation canals in Pigcawayan were diverted to villages and farmlands, mostly planted with rice and corn.

In a session on Tuesday, Vice Gov. Manny Pinol urged Gov. Jesus Sacdalan and town officials to release part of their calamity funds.

Pinol also urged the provincial health office to initiate steps to prevent the spread of diseases. Edwin G. Hernandez, Inquirer Mindanao

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Ermita: Senate ZTE probe's failure to link GMA, vindication

Front page A1

were really an evident whitewash" hiding the President," said Escudero, who sided with the President and other Cabinet members on a roll-on, roll-off (RO-RO) vessel in the final leg of the Roxas-Bicol-Abra convoy.

Ermita said the Senate, as a whole, should come up with a formal report on the scandal which spawned fresh calls for Ms Arroyo's resignation.

Ms Arroyo shunted the $329-million deal in October last year after allegations that then Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. received kickbacks and that her husband, Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, was also involved in the deal.

The NBN deal was aimed at linking digitally government agencies from the provincial level down to the barangay nationwide.

Guingona said the blue ribbon committee would come out with an interim report on the results of its probe within the next two months if no new witnesses come forward.

Not yet time to end probe

Lacson said it was not yet time to end the probe of the President or the First Couple, even if it is, in effect, an admission that the case against the First Couple is in their very midst or does not exist at all," Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago said.

She said the earlier the panel report was released, "the faster it becomes ex-Dana being charged."

Prescribed period

Santiago said the blue ribbon committee should come up with the report to comply with the prescribed time period under Senate rules.

The Senate started its probe in September last year and had since then conducted 11 hearings.

Sen. Loren Legarda agreed with Cayetano that the chances for the Senate need not wait for a witness to come forward before making a final report.

"We have spent so much time for the hearings, asked so many questions. We don't want to waste our time waiting for a witness who is not really involved in the ZTE deal," Legarda said.

Based on the testimonies, there was no direct link to the President, she said. "There was no money handed to her. There was nothing like that although some of those close to her were present (in the ZTE meetings), but we still cannot link this to her," Legarda said.

Sen. Mar Roxas also agreed with Cayetano, saying there is no evidence "that implicates the President to the deal or that the President had issued orders on the ZTE deal.

"That is an accurate reflection of the record. But there are clearly other circumstances and other events that would lead one to conclude that notwithstanding the narrative, the President clearly followed or clearly had some say as to the direction of the transaction as well as the approval of the transaction. That is the reason why the Neda (National Economic and Development Authority) documents are important," Roxas said.

Wait for SC ruling

Roxas said that he would agree to a committee report on the condition that it was not final. "The cleaner choice is probably because the Supreme Court has yet to act on our petition to release the Neda documents showing the process in approving the NBN project," Roxas said.

Roxas noted that the Senate agreed in the Supreme Court compromise for the conditional appearance of Romulo Neri, former Neda chief, the joint commission investigating the NBN-ZTE deal would have been able to come up with more evidence on issues that Neri was willing to discuss.

Lacson also said he would not oppose the drafting of a committee report as long as it was not final.

"The Supreme Court has not yet resolved our motion for reconsideration and we still have a pending subpoena issued against Ruben Reyes. His lawyer Sonders Diaz has already promised us to bring his client here," Lacson said.

Bagayao

Reyes was identified in previous hearings as the alleged bagman who received about $11 million in advance kickbacks from ZTE Corp. for the "Gaweda Group 1+1," which supposedly consisted of the Arroyo family and Mike Arroyo and Abalos.

Lacson said the debate over the fate of the NBN probe only showed how crucial the Supreme Court decision was to upholding Neri's right to invoke executive privilege to the senators' questions on the President's orders after Neri informed her of the $200-million bribe allegedly offered by Abalos to him to endorse the NBN deal.

"We could have obtained a broad range of significant information from Neri had he been forced by the high court to talk," said Lacson.

The Senate wants to reverse the tribunal's decision which upheld Neri's invocation of executive privilege and his conversation with the President on the ZTE deal.

Legal complications

Ermita pointed to legal complications arising from issuing a report on the Senate investigation ahead of the Supreme Court ruling on the motion for reconsideration (MR) the Senate had filed.

"If they are very well say that they can't come out with a comprehensive report because they haven't heard Neri. But they can't hear Neri because the decision of the Supreme Court was adverse to what they asked, and now there's an MR," he said.

Fallen colonel sought AFP reforms, say 'mistahs'

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mated was so deeply bothered that he later initiated a counseling session with prison doctor Fr. Romeo "Archie" Intengan of the Ateneo de Manila.

"He shocked a prairie response when Intengan told him he understood the politics in the military and eventually overcame his problems in the AFP," Intengan said.

But years later, Colcol's comrades aggressively swarmed to haunt him.

Even as police investigators are still looking into the circumstances of his death, his mistahs seem to believe that the 48-year-old Scout Ranger, a veteran of many battles in Mindanao and one of the Army's brilliant field commanders, took his own life.

Burial at high noon

A recipient of various awards, including the Distinguished Conduct Star (the second highest military award), Colcol's remains will be laid to rest at high noon yesterday at the Libingan ng mga Bayani.

His siblings asked that their privacy be respected and politely declined to be interviewed.

On Sunday, his elder sister, Myrna, told the heavens that she and the rest of the family had decided that his suicide could speak on their behalf.

According to Army Col. Sonny Gadiel, Colcol had trouble sleeping last year when duty took him to the Naval War College Masters in National Security Administration (MNSA) course at the National Defense College.

Gadiel said his close friend did not say why he could not sleep, but that the problem was solved with a doctor's help.

However, the sleeping problem recurred a few months ago, Gadiel said, adding: "He lost his appetite and lost some weight."

On the Sunday before his friend's death, Gadiel and his family visited Colcol in the latter's quarters.

"He seemed okay," Gadiel recalled. "But he also told me that he was still bothered by his remaining 'accountability' for Lost Firearms and equipment back when he was in the field. He also said he still feels guilty that many men and men had died under his wards, and he continued to think about the families they left behind."

Gadiel said he told Colcol that the accountability for the firearms was a small problem.

As for the father, Gadiel told Colcol that he had been a good leader to them.

Unconscious valor

In his years serving Scout Ranger Capt. Samuel Yompar described the three battle between troops belonging to the First Scout Ranger Battalion under Colcol's command and Abu Sayyaf bandits in Patas Mabal in Indanan, Sulu, in April 2006.

Yompar, then a young lieutenant, said that under Colcol's leadership and extraordinary bravery, the battalion was able to overrun the fortified Abu Sayyaf camp.

"Despite very explosives and heavy fire everywhere and a bullet injured Colcol's head by two inches, but the troops rallied on despite the heavy casualties they had suffered," Yompar said.

From the two-mile squads Colcol's men had organized for "Operation Final Option"—the mission to rescue the bandits' hostages—five were awarded the Medal for Valor.

Yompar did not mention the conflict Colcol had with higher-ups during the battle.

But it was an incident that many of Colcol's comrades acknowledged to be among the things that had bothered him.

A source from the Scout Rangers said Colcol was the second member of the battalion—and not the third, as earlier reported—believed to have committed suicide years after the Patas Mabal battle.

The enlisted man earlier thought to have died by his own hand in separate incidents involving alleged lovers in the battalion's ranks also ended up killing himself at least twice, the source told the inquirer.

Something different

On the other hand, Army Col. Ricardo Visaya described Santander Colcol managed to pass the military's neuropsychiatric exams several times if he was depressed enough to commit suicide.

A classmate at the MNSA, Andrés Dicen, could not believe that Colcol would take his own life, saying he was a cheerful, albeit private, person with a nice smile.

But Army Col. Daniel Lucero, president of the PMA Class of 1983, said he and some colmates had been noticing "something different" in Colcol, something they could not exactly put their finger on.

"If you know somebody well enough, you will notice if there's something different in him," Lucero told the Inquirer.

On the Tuesday before Colcol died, Lucero and other colmates met to discuss how they could help Colcol. They decided that they would ask a doctor from the AFP Medical Center to talk to him.

Gadiel was assigned to go to Colcol's quarters at 9 a.m. on Thursday, April 24, with the doctor.

According to police investigators, Colcol shot himself at around 8:30 a.m.

'We missed him'

"I was on my way to his place when another mistah called me on my mobile phone. He said, 'Sir (friend), we missed Ben,'" Gadiel said, sighing.

Gadiel said Colcol's men have been stymied by a lot of things, including the Patas Mabal battle and his conflicts with his superiors.

Responding to a question, he said promotions were contributing could have helped his friend.

"The last time we met, he told me he already wanted to retire, to rest, that he did not want to serve in the meantime," Gadiel said, adding that he had encouraged Colcol to stay in the AFP.

1989 coup participant

In his eulogy, Gadiel recalled how Colcol's idealism moved him to join the 1989 coup attempt, the bloodiest, against the administration of President Corazon Aquino.

"He did not regret joining the coup's leadership because that was his conviction. He was for reforms in the AFP," Gadiel said.

Bernie said Colcol's idealism would be "cherished forever."

Yompar said the story of Patas Mabal(s) had been "told and retold with Colonel Colcol as the focal point."

Defining moments

"He shaped the defining moments of many officers and men who fought for the glory of the Philippine Army and the AFP, and he will always be remembered," Yompar said.

As he ended his eulogy, Yompar faced his commander's white casket and executed a snappy final salute.

Was the Battle of Manila Bay on film as claimed by US producer?

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It all happened on a moonlit night on April 30. Following the order by navy Commodore George Dewey and his naval squadron arrived at the mouth of Manila Bay. Having sent an ultimatum to Dewey's fleet received the south channel at 11 p.m. to obtain formation.

At daybreak, Dewey reported that the fleet was "fired upon at a quarter past five a.m. by three batteries in Manila and two near Cavite."

Vigorous, ineffective

In his biography, Dewey recalls: "The squadron then proceeded to the attack, the flagship Olympia under my personal direction leading, followed at a distance by the Baltimore, Raleigh, Petrel, Concord, and Boston ... The squadron opened fire at 5:41 a.m. While advancing to the attack two mines were exploded ahead of the flagship, one late in his effective." Dewey describes his enemy's resistance as "vigorous but generally ineffective."

The Reina Cristina under Adm. Patricio Montojo y Pasaron, commander of the Spanish fleet, attempted to engage the Olympia at close range but was overpowered by the Americans. Despite much firing, the Spaniards hardly inflicted damage on the invading Americans.

"At 7:35 a.m.," recalls Dewey, "I issued firing and withdrawal the squadron for consultation and a redistribution of ammunition, if necessary." They left the battle arena with almost the entire Spanish armada in Bastion. At 11:35 a.m., Dewey's fleet returned, but there was little left of the enemy. At 12:30 p.m., the Americans stopped firing and at 1 p.m. Dewey's fleet anchored off Manila.

Dewey won. The Philippines, dominated by Spain for more than 300 years, found a new master.

2 filmmakers and a war

A claim is now made that two filmmakers recorded the Battle of Manila Bay. It says that almost the 68 Baltimore were American producer James Henry White and British cameraman Frederick W. Blechynden. Both were working for the film studio of inventor Thomas Alva Edison.

They were on board, or so they claimed, to witness Dewey's triumph and took "a thousand feet" of the battle with their Kinetograph, an early form of moving picture device.

Quick and decisive

White made this claim in an article by Charles Edward Hastings in The Morning Theater World on Jan. 29, 1927. In the unedited [or perhaps made it up] tape during a trip to the Orient, he and his partner accidentally joined the American forces on their way to war in Manila. White claimed they were "guests" of Capt. Nehemiah Dyer aboard the Baltimore.

White recounts:

"The action on the morning of May 1, 1898 was quick and decisive. From the Baltimore, I was enabled to get some splendid 'shots' during the action." He describes how the US fleet opened fire shortly before 5 a.m. Half an hour later, Dewey ordered the fleet out to sea, to breakfast, and back again to finish the job.

"Percy Holligan, flag officer for (Dewey), gave us a lot of splendid details afterwards, regarding incidents on the flagship, and I hurriedly developed my negatives to show the officers of the fleet, before rushing them back to New York. These pictures were shown later in Hale's Museum in New York City."

White later adds that he and his companions had to "pass up" the opportunity of going with the American troops in the SS Oregon for the fight in Cuban waters, in order to "clean up" the Manila "mess."

Impressed, Hastings writes

Impressed, Hastings writes: White and Blechynden "practically across a perfectly good war, with a tripping camera engagement to top it off."

On threshold of history

The film made during that war, if indeed there was any, no matter if short and short, was by no means inconsequential. The Spanish-American War indeed changed the world's balance of power.

At pinnacle of early cinema, White and Blechynden's presence at the battle, while purely coincidental, brought them on the threshold of history both scientific and cinematically. Despite White's claim, including an interview in 1934 printed in The Official Lantern and Cinematograph Journal, no film of the battle survives. Its absence creates the possibility of a hoax.

Circumstances surrounding the supposed making of the film may even support White's claim. Looking at how the Baltimore figured in the naval war, it is hard to imagine how the duo could have shot the event from the battered ship. Baltimore sustained the heaviest damage during the battle. Only two days before White and Blechynden could have positioned themselves if indeed they were there taking film footage.

Prisoners on board

The presence of the two may not easily be ruled out. It is interesting that on board the Baltimore and other warships were printing facilities and personnel to write eyewitness accounts of the battle.

On the Olympia, a paper titled "The Morning Herald," edited by Louis Stanley Young was printed. Another was "Boatswain's Mate" published on the Baltimore. With the printing presses and journalists, one may be inclined to think, although remotely, that the two filmmakers may also have been there.

But even with such a thought, the next question will be: how were the two able to leave the battle area necessary to bring home and smuggle their ship to the United States with Dewey imposing a naval blockade on Manila Bay? Reports in a Honolulu paper announced the team's arrival in Hawaii on May 9.

In the absence of irrefutable proof—such as perhaps the appearance of the film footage, or a copyright claim, a progress bill of the screening at Hubert's Museum, an advertisement about the film's commercial showing—White's claim may be seen as one of the many myths surrounding early cinema.

A reenactment, a melodrama

Other "Battle of Manila Bay" films have also been made. One was by the British duo, J. Stuart Blackton and Albert E. Smith—a reenactment of the event that some months it happened. The two shot paper ships to a mock battle on an agitated table-top in a studio on the roof of the American Vitagraph in New York City.

In the same month, Blackton gave a lecture at Keeler's Museum, on Broadway, "Battle of Manila," where he used an "experiment" in the said battle. Of course, he was not in the battle scene, and his lecture was a piece of fiction.

As late as 1933, another simulation film was produced by Francis Ford and distributed by Universal company. Its synopsis reads in part: "A sea-port special offering of war, love and adventure, but mostly of war ... The picture is exciting, not historical. The story is entirely melodramatic."

War victory, box office hit

The US victory at the Battle of Manila Bay has been one of the celebrated themes in early American cinema that stimulated vast interests in the box office.

From the "imagined" film by White to the "mock" sea battle made by Smith and Blackton to Ford's "melodrama," the story of how the Philippines was won by American has been a subject of much historical significance and commercial interest.

In the films may be found the coming together of reality and fantasy the mighty pens of journalists may either spur the zeal kill or flame fight on screen and capture imaginations.

US' supremacy

In hindsight, it was as in cinema, America has shown its supremacy. The past 110 years has much to tell us how the American has gone to attain its superpower status such that now it is now engaged in Afghanistan and Iraq. Its position as a global film power also remains unchallenged. It's truly been one long journey since the battle of Manila Bay.

DA to distribute rice in 2,500 stores in Metro

By Amy R. Remo
and Nancy Carvajal

STARTING THIS MONTH, THE Department of Agriculture will distribute in more than 2,500 retail outlets in Metro Manila its government-subsidized rice, initially benefiting some 600,000 families, Top said.

"This project forms part of the DA's aggressive price-watch and distribution strategy to stabilize rice prices, with the poorest of the poor as the main beneficiaries," Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said.

In a report to President Macapagal-Arroyo, Yap said the DA would add another 1,200 stores and selling points for subsidized rice to the existing 1,325 outlets in Metro Manila.

He said this "targeted subsidy" approach would not only help stabilize prices of rice but also ensure that cheap rice sold at P18.25 a kilo reaches the poorest of the poor.

The NFA will also sell in these stores higher-quality well-milled rice varieties at P28 a kilo to help pull down the cost of commercial rice in the market and help middle-income earners cope with rising food prices.

In particular, Yap said the NFA would mobilize rice supplies in Metro Manila some 400 selling stores; 146 Tindahan sa Bayan operated by religious groups; 1,300 Tindahan Kadamay outlets; 324 Kooperatibong Tindahan ng Dikita sa Barangay (KTDKBs); 242 outlets operated by local government units (LGUs); and nine NFA emergency outlets.

Earlier, Yap ordered the NFA to intensify the distribution of government-subsidized rice stocks in the country's 32 highly populated areas.

He said these areas were Metro Manila, Baguio City, Lucena, Legazpi, Tacloban, Iloilo City, Cebu City, Dumaguete, Davao City, Cagayan de Oro, Zamboanga City and General Santos City.

Appeal to suspend VAT

In light of the soaring food prices, a multi-sectoral group called for the suspension of the value-added tax (VAT) on food, medicine, water, electricity and transport, including building materials and supplies.

In a manifesto, the group, consisting of labor groups, local manufacturers, traders, small farmers, government employees and the religious, also urged the government to provide immediate economic relief to the poorest of the poor by way of food subsidy.

Allan Dizon Mendoza, of Fair Trade alliance, the group's secretariat, said among those who signed the manifesto were Bishop Tolentin, convenor of Fair Trade; Mitzi Cadiz, Federation of Philippine Industries; Rep. Rene Magtubo, Bayan-Muna; Rep. Josel Dilan, Akbayan; National Labor Union; Rey Elbo, Alliance for Social Concerns; Ann Unali, National Union for Bank Employees; Dean Jorge Sibal, University of the Philippines School of Labor and Industrial Relations; Angel Dimagiba, Kilusang Bayan ng mga Alliance; and Ernesto Dodoler, Agri Watch.

The group also urged the government to institute more stringent measures in curbing smuggling and running after hoarders and speculators.

Rebuild agro-industrial base

It said the NFA must buy palay (unhusked rice) from the farmers at a reasonable and prices that would enable the farmers to recoup their production costs and earn a little income until the next harvest season.

The group emphasized the importance of rebuilding the country's agro-industrial base, which it said was the key to the country's attainment of food security.

RP proposes int'l buffer stock

THE PHILIPPINES PROPOSED on Wednesday the creation of an international rice buffer stock to ensure global food security amid surging prices.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said the stockpile could be initiated by the UN or the World Bank to prevent sharp increases in rice prices.

"It's time to put up an international buffer stock, perhaps with a special drawing rights system that would be available to any country in the world," Yap told Bloomberg Television.

He said hyperinflation (hunger) in many countries right now, and "it's in the best interest of the world that we work together for stability in rice prices."

Yap's comments came after the Philippines, the world's largest rice importer, failed to buy all the grain it sought in an April tender despite agreeing to pay 62 percent more than at a similar tender just a month ago.

The government said it has set the signed contracts for about half of the 2.1 million metric tons of rice it plans to import this year. It is to finish another tender next week.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said Tuesday the country will need to keep importing rice until at least 2013 to make up for a 10 percent domestic shortfall.

Ms Arroyo said the Philippines might not be able to achieve rice self-sufficiency until then because "we really cannot put as serious a long-run policy when we have a near-term solution that we need to address."

The Philippines faces many challenges in boosting production, including geography. The archipelago has few level and arable for rice production than many of its Asian neighbors, and suffers from typhoons that frequently destroy rice paddies.

The Philippines' rice predicament has failed to keep up with a growing population, which topped 88 million last year. AP

FACT BOX

Why rice prices surging to record highs

ASIAN RICE PRICES HAVE ALMOST TRIPLED this year and prices on the Chicago Board of Trade have risen more than 80 percent to hit successive record highs as importers scrambled to buy supplies that have stopped flowing from key suppliers.

With only 30 million tons traded annually, government supply varies, such as those from time limits and limits, have spooked importers, such as the Philippines and Bangladesh, at a time when global stocks have hovered since hitting a record high in 2000.

Export curbs

- **October 2007**—India, which runs the world's second largest rice exporter last year but is set to lag behind Thailand and the United States this year, bans exports of non-basmati rice to rein in prices and control inflation, but later in the month raised the ban to allow exports of a million of the grain.
- **March 2008**—India bans exports of non-basmati rice again as inflation hits a 14-month high, alarming policymakers.
- **March 2008**—Egypt bans rice exports from April 1 to October to hold down local prices. The country normally produces about 3.5 million tons a year of white rice, leaving a domestic surplus of about 1.4 million tons for export.
- **April 2008**—Vietnam, due to expand its position as the No. 2 exporter this year, extends a ban on rice sales until June to help stabilize domestic food prices as it tries to tame double-digit inflation. Prior to that, it had curtailed exports for March and April.
- **April 2008**—Japan temporarily suspends rice exports to safeguard its domestic supply and says exports of rice for industrial use, such as for beer, which is not a major global rice supplier, reported 19,000 tons of rice last year.
- **April 2008**—Indonesia, Southeast Asia's largest rice consumer, says it would curb medium-grade rice exports to combat inflation. Under Indonesian law rice export rules, state procurement agency Bulog is allowed to sell medium-grade rice overseas only when national stocks are above 2 million tons and domestic prices are below a government's target price.
- **April 2008**—India says it grant taxes on basmati rice, on top of an existing ban on non-basmati rice exports.

Scramble to build stocks

- **January 2008**—Bangladesh signs deals and starts importing 160,000 tons of white rice from neighboring Burma (Myanmar). The Bangladesh government and private traders slashed import tariffs in the crop known crashed by flooding last year.
- **March 2008**—The Philippines says it aims to import up to 2.2 million tons of rice this year to meet a domestic shortfall, in what could be the biggest overseas purchase of the staple in a decade. Local harvests have failed to keep up with expanding population, lifting inflation to a 16-month high.
- **March 2008**—Costa Rica expects its state-run importer to purchase 100,000 tons in the 2008/09 crop year, which begins in July as farmers replace some rice fields with other crops such as sugarcane and pineapple. Rationalize in the shrinking rice area, price hikes and yields.
- **March 2008**—Bangladesh says it would import 600,000 tons of rice from India to cushion the country's dwindling stocks. The imports, allowed under a government-to-government deal, would not be subjected to the rise in rice export prices.
- **April 2008**—Singapore says it would allow rice importers to bring in more stock to meet increased demand and consumers' fears of a rice supply crunch and higher prices.

Falling world inventories

World inventories have fallen by nearly 10 percent from a record high of 147.1 million tons in 2000/01, although they have already recovered slightly from a low in 2004/05. They are expected to rise marginally by the end of this crop year.

Speculative buying

On the Chicago Board of Trade, financial speculators looking for the next big commodity play have helped lift prices by about 80 percent this year to successive record highs. To a degree, hoarding by consumers has also fed the run by spurring importers to seek supplies sooner.

Diversification of land use

In some countries such as the Philippines, production is failing to keep up with demand because paddy land is being overtaken for industrial development, or because farmers are seeking other crops that provide a better return. Both should contribute to supply tightness in the future.

Growing demand

In poor nations facing a doubling in wheat and corn prices, rice consumption is rising, but this is partly offset by falling per-capita consumption in big countries such as China.

Data from the US Department of Agriculture shows that consumption in China—which accounts for 32 percent of world consumption—has fallen by 1.0 percent over the past five years. But global consumption has risen by 2.7 percent over the same period, in places such as Nigeria, the Philippines and Bangladesh. Reuters

Opec-style rice cartel up

To see page A1

Thailand is the world's largest rice exporter. It shipped an estimated 9.3 million tons of rice overseas last year.

Nitchi ties prices have soared this year, a trend blamed on higher energy and fertilizer costs, greater global demand, droughts, the ban of rice farmland to biofuel plantations, and price speculation.

International demand for Thai rice has soared after other top exporters Vietnam and India imposed limits on exports to ensure domestic supply.

But he complained that limited it will not limit exports, but on Tuesday the government announced it was widening its stockpile of 2.1 million tons into the domestic market to keep prices stable.

Crisis is opportunity for farmers

The benchmark Thai variety, Pathumthani Fragrant rice, was priced last Wednesday at $998 per ton for export, up from $512 a ton in January this year, the Thai Rice Exporters Association said in a price survey.

Thailand's Commerce Ministry on Wednesday appointed to the country's farmers to start growing rice and other crops, saying most of the population would benefit from the global food crisis.

"The food crisis in the world, instead, offers an opportunity for Cambodian farmers although certain complains about the soaring price of rice," Hun Sen said during a ceremony some 80 km north of Phnom Penh.

"But in reverse, some 80 percent (of the population) who are farmers benefit from this. Now the opportunity for our Cambodian farmers has arrived," he said.

Hun Sen said state facilities say most of the country and appealed to farmers to grow a variety of crops, including rice, corn and beans. All the crops have a market now," the premier said.

Hun Sen blamed rice exports to raise blood in a bid to halt soaring prices for the staple food.

But on Wednesday, Hun Sen said that the government was considering exporting rice to find markets for Cambodian farmers and to "fulfill our international obligation to helping other countries, to reduce the difficulty in the world."

"Cambodia is a small country, but it can help hundreds of thousands of families if we can export the rice," Hun Sen said.

"We cannot survive alone," he said, urging governments to find ways to ensure "the world has food security."

Officials have said that Cambodia has enough rice with more than 2 million tons stockpiled.

Drop export restrictions

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on October urged countries to drop export restrictions and said the immediate priority must be to "feed the hungry" and he ordered a task force to tackle the global crisis.

Fearing rice prices have forced the UN World Food Program to indefinitely suspend a program supplying free breakfasts to 450,000 poor Cambodian schoolchildren.

Border spokesperson Kim Sethy, the move from $700 per ton to Cambodia compared with $350-$400 last year, according to sellers.

Cambodia, where more than 20 percent of the population of 14 million lives in poverty, is one of 13 "hunger hot spot" countries, according to the 2008 Global Hunger Index of the International Food Policy Research Institute. AFP

All about 'secret' Cabinet revamp from GMA herself

To see page A1

hosted by Gov. Jesse Jumlin Robredo and his father, Rep. Peter Robredo.

'How nice to sing'

The President said Reyes had been singing since he was chief of staff of the Armed Forces.

"He was singing then up at night. Sometimes, they would say, 'We'll call you up because he's delivering a speech,'" she said, adding that she learned later on that Reyes was serious by singing.

"We'll call you back because he's singing," Ms Arroyo said, chuckling.

Then, looking at the stars, she said: "Under this beautiful atmosphere of this island paradise, how nice to be able to sing."

The President made no mention of the fate of Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza and even Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, who was sitting next to her during the dinner with reporters in the sprawling Bantayan mansion where food and drink freely flowed.

Ermita did ask for Bunye and Mendoza, who were not around when she approached the tables reserved for the media at past 10 p.m.

She praised Mendoza for organizing the second Ro-Ro caravan that traversed the central corridor of the Visayas dubbed as the "Central Nautical Highway" and took note of Bunye's presence from Bohol to Camiguin.

The two men had retired for the night, Ms Arroyo said.

She repeated the word "secret" when asked about the fate of others in the Cabinet.

"No more, no more Ignacios about the Jueces," she said.

'What's the question?'

On board the Ro-Ro vessel that left Camiguin yesterday for Bulilingan, Mambajao, Oriental, reporters sought comments from Ermita, Reyes, Bernardo and Social Welfare Secretary Esperanza Cabral, among others.

Asked about the chances of remaining in the Cabinet, Reyes said: "What's the question?" Reporters repeated the query, but Reyes declined, saying: "Secret."

Ermita said he had yet to speak with Ms Arroyo about the revamp, but reiterated what he had told the media in Cagayan, Bohol: "Our members of the Cabinet were clueless on the subject.

Missing yet unaccomplished

Fernando said he would rather thank his "enemies" before being replaced by someone else.

"You want to see the completion of your mission. It would be the wish of every secretary of the Cabinet [that] you might not be able to complete your programs. There's no better reward than fulfillment," he said.

Fernando disclosed that he was planning to come out with another poster hunting for illegal firearms. He did not want to dismiss the problem of political gun posters on Cebu.

"It's an advocacy of the government," he said. "The picture is the message that for votes, 'Filipinos should be serious.'"

Asked if the posters had something to do with preparations for the presidential election in 2010, Fernando said: "Well, if it's a good one it may be. It may serve a good campaign purpose. But it's not [if it is] not as it is bad.

"What's for the next person."

'Not included'

Back in Manila yesterday evening, Ms Arroyo indicated that the justice portfolio was not up for grabs.

In response to elusive questions of whether Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez would be included in the revamp, she said with a smile, "Hindi kasama (Not included). Secret," as she looked to his direction.

Ms Arroyo was at the Department of Justice to follow up on the progress of the cases filed against alleged coup participants.

Sought for comment later, Gonzalez said the President's remark was comforting.

But he pointed out that the situation was fluid. "As I said, until the full revamp is completed, anything can still happen. That is comforting ... I am still always be pleased with, in effect, a vote of confidence from your boss.

"And if she gives you a vote of confidence, then that is something which one should treasure."

Embarrassed

He added that the President was still the person to determine the loyalty, qualifications and competency of the people who would work with her.

At Camp Crame earlier in the day, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno told reporters that he was embarrassed by talk that he would replace Ermita.

He said the planned reorganization of Ms Arroyo's officials had not been the subject of discussion at Cabinet meetings lately.

"I am embarrassed. I heard this in the newspapers. None of us have been talking about the reshuffle," he said.

Puno said he had worked with Ermita closely since 1997, when the Ramos administration was hammering out the peace agreement with the separatist Moro National Liberation Front.

"He is my boss. I respect my boss. We've known each other for a long time. We've worked together since 1997, and so if discourages I speculations about the Palace offering me the position," Puno said, laughing.

"It's embarrassing, with these rumors circulating."

On rumors that Michael Defensor, Ms Arroyo's former chief of staff and a beloved senator, of candidates of the administration's Team Unity (TU), would replace him as interior secretary, Puno said: "I think the last thing Mike Defensor wants to do is get my job."

He added that he preferred to remain at his post. "I think I'm more qualified to work in this department than to another department. For example if I'm in energy, I don't think I'll work well there, or anywhere else. So let's just see what decision the President will make."

Counterproductive

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus commented that the speculation that he would be replaced had been floated for the 6th time.

Said Lapus: "Such destabilizing rumors are counterproductive in a huge organization such as the Department of Education, which really has had five secretaries already in six years.

"As Chief Executive, only Ms Arroyo knows the real score about revamps and will surely go by performance and stability in the department since [he has presidency] in there.

"Despite it now one of the top-rated agencies in public approval surveys."

According to the talk, Teano Aquino-Oreta, yet another of the losing TU senatorial candidates, is trying his ambition for portfolio. With reports from Alexis Pupa and Leila B. Salaverria in Manila

More Sports on A25 to27

Late SPORTS

Dragons still hot; Barako on top

By Manuel R. Carallo

LIGHTNING JOLT STRUCK MAGNO-lia Welcon

Welcon was back to back games for just the second time in franchise history last night, claiming another powerhouse victim in the Beverage Masters, 100-101, in the eliminations of the Smart Gilas Cup at the Araneta Coliseum in Cubao.

Marquis Chiverse teared in a PBA career-high 32 points, had eight rebounds and two steals, and four others dropped in with twin digits as the Dragons improved to 2-4.

Red Bull, were without Adam Parada heading into the final five minutes, pulled out an 81-75 spurt of Coca-Colacoans to the win lead in the second game with a 5-1 card.

Cyrus Baguio scored 23 points, including five game-finishing layup off a Coca-Cola double team for 79-75 spring into the final 23 seconds which put a stop to a two-game run by the Tigers and left them at 5-2.

While Welcon has had more than its share of success against Magnolia, coach Cabe Gaviola said that in a series of what happened to the team after a 95-92 overtime win over the Beverage Masters last Nov. 16—a 15-game losing streak.

It is a feat that didn't escape the Dragons' import.

"Yes, I know about that, my teammates have told me," Chiverse, the six-footholder left-hander, said. "We feel really confident in ourselves and we know that we can get the."

Mikecel's defensive unit not exceptional, but the Dragons opened the front almost all contact and snapped Magnolia's three-game winning streak for a 3-2 card.

Second import Corey Sanders scored 23 points and had seven assists for Welcon.

Donny Seigle, recovering from an operation that corrected a nagging foot injury, was newly-reduced by Magnolia.

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DID YOU KNOW

LABOR DAY was first celebrated in the Philippines in 1903. The celebration was organized by the Union Obrero Democratica, the first labor federation in the country. On this day 105 years ago, more than a hundred thousand workers marched in Malacañang to publicly demand better working conditions. *Kate Pedroso, Inquirer Research*

Syndicate linked to fake SSS claims busted

Suspects nabbed with photocopying machine, bogus BIR and postal ID cards

By Marlen Ramos

AUTHORITIES YESTERDAY ARrested nine suspected members of a syndicate involved in making fake identification cards and documents used to make Social Security System (SSS) claims.

A joint team of operatives from the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority and the Quezon City Police District arrested the nine in front of the SSS building on East Avenue, Barangay Pinyahan.

They were identified as Moradina Malinsigin, 42; Norma dela Cruz, 40; Ronnie Cruz, 48; Jayson Monga, 20; Ernesto Manonito, 28; Carlito dela Cruz, 46; Susan Bongalog, 44; Princess Montalbo, 23; and Cecilia Garganera, 52.

Supt. Fip Pinzang, chief of the MMDA intelligence and investigation unit, said the group's fake IDs and other documents were used by unscrupulous individuals to falsify claims for death benefits, loans and even unentitled pensions of legitimate SSS members.

The suspects also allegedly issued notarized documents, although none of them is a lawyer.

Pinzang said the operation was prompted by a complaint from SSS officials and after one of their undercover agents was able to buy a fake ID from the group.

"Some members outside the SSS office served as lookouts while other members of the syndicate reproduce IDs and documents," he told the reporters.

Seized from the suspects were several fake postal IDs and Bureau of Internal Revenue cards, a photocopying machine, dry seal stamps and rubber stamps bearing the names of lawyers.

Pinzang said the suspects will be charged with falsification of public documents. The rules, however, do not cite the accusations.

Montalban said the only accepted ripping jobs, "I didn't know that accepting ripping jobs was illegal," she said. "I'm not a member of any syndicate."

Police file complaint vs Baron Geisler

By Lolit B. Salaverria

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE yesterday filed a complaint for acts of lasciviousness in the Department of Justice against actor Baron Friedrich Von Geisler.

Earlier, the 21-year-old daughter of show business couple William Martinez and Vaya Aguila, Patricia Blanco, accused Geisler of touching her breast and asking her to have sex with him.

In her sworn police statement which was attached to the complaint filed in the DOJ, Patricia said the incident took place inside a bar in Makati City on April 26.

In an earlier interview on television, the young girl said she was with her friends inside the establishment when she decided to send a text message to Geisler, asking him to join her at the bar.

Patricia said in her statement that she was helping Geisler create his change when he placed his arm around her and then hugged her.

Uncomfortable

She added that she was uncomfortable with this so she tried to move away, but he refused to loosen his hold on her.

The actor then asked her if she had a boyfriend, Patricia told the police. When she said how close she had one, he stared at her and asked her to have sex with him.

She said that she was taken by surprise by Geisler's action because she had looked up to him as an older brother.

Geisler and Aguila used to be "housemates" in the reality show, "Pinoy Big Brother" which aired on ABS-CBN.

At this point, Patricia said that Geisler, who, by then, knew that he had offended her, apologized and asked for a hug.

He then embraced her even though she said she had placed her hand against his chest to prevent him from moving too close to her.

Moving away

She said she was moving away from Geisler when he cupped her face with his hands and then touched her breast.

After the incident, Patricia said she signaled to her friends that she wanted to leave the bar. Geisler, however, saw the gesture and asked her not be angry with him.

"Do not be annoyed," she quoted him as telling her.

At this point, she said she got mad and shouted at the actor. Geisler left shortly after.

Patricia added that she narrated the incident to Geisler's brother, Donald, who assured her that he would try to talk to his brother.

Geisler, in an interview over radio station dzMM, had denied the girl's accusations, although he said that he was willing to talk to her parents to clench matters.

Residents, cops clash in QC demolition

By Marlen Ramos

TENSION GRIPPED CAMP Karingal in Quezon City yesterday when two plainclothes policemen fired three guns into the air as they figured in a shooting match with several residents after they resisted the demolition of their houses.

Members of the Camp Karingal Barangay Neighborhood Association Inc. have went to the Quezon City Police District's Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit to file a complaint against the two policemen.

Residents said the two, identified only as PO2 Chinco and PO2 Abonales, were members of the QCPD District Police Intelligence Operations Unit.

A homeowner who asked not to be named for fear of reprisal said the two were walking in front of a row of houses being demolished at around 11:30 a.m. when they overheard a group of women talking about how outlaws the policemen were for tearing down their houses.

One of the policemen allegedly shouted obscenities at the women who then hurled back at them.

At the height of the argument, the duo reportedly drew their guns and fired twice into the air.

The two stopped and left the place only after QCPD officials intervened.

Senior Supt. Elmo San Diego, QCPD chief for administration, said he has ordered an investigation of the incident.

There have before the incident, two residents, Brenda Pada and Saidi Jandoi, were arrested and later released after they reportedly went to fight back policemen and members of the demolition team.

Around 300 houses inside the camp are set to be demolished to give way for the construction of a building for policemen.

Residents, however, have questioned the legality of the demolition, saying the QCPD had no proof it has a right to evict them from their houses.

A WOMAN cries as she watches her house in Camp Karingal being demolished. CHRISTINE TORRES

MTRCB workers protest firing of union officers

By Marlen Ramos

EMPLOYEES OF THE MOVIE and television review and Classification Board (MTRCB) yesterday held a silent protest in support of the president and secretary of their union who, they said, were unjustly fired by the agency.

Some 13 members of the MTRCB Employees Association went out of their offices to the second floor and briefly picketed the agency's main office on President's Town Center, Timog Avenue, Barangay Sacred Heart.

The protesters lashed out at MTRCB chair Ma. Consuelo Lagsardia for what they said were her administration's unfair step for dismissal from the agency of Mona Sinsilla and Nolleva Jacobe last April 8.

Sinsilla and Jacobe, the MTRCB union's president and secretary, respectively, were earlier suspended by Lagsardia for three months after they were charged with falsification of public documents and dishonesty.

The case stemmed from their alleged role in falsifying the collective negotiation agreement (CBA) between the union and the MTRCB management.

A protester, Bel del Rosario, said the dismissed union leaders were victims of unfair treatment by some senior officials.

Del Rosario said they filed to talk to Lagsardia, but she refused to listen. "The charges made in our CBA only involved the dues. It was done in good faith. We could have resolved it amicably," she added.

The protesters tried to get Lagsardia's aide but her secretary, Delia Batido, said she was in a meeting.

Fil-Am accuses doctors of 'botched' procedure

By DJ Yap

MANUEL AND PIA GALAPON, known as dentists in the town before their children left for the United States, now say they are broke after they accused the couple of botching a penis enhancement procedure he underwent in their clinic last September.

The couple yesterday submitted their reply to the complaint of Joseph Martinez, also known as Joseph Rosebuck, who claimed his penis was disfigured after the operation.

The Galapons denied any wrongdoing in the separate counter-counter-affidavits they filed in the office of Makati Assistant City Prosecutor Dennis Orda.

Manuel, who performed the operation, said he had sufficient say by informed Martinez about the possible complications of the procedure, which Martinez, who merely accompanied the two during consultations, said she should not have been a respondent in the first place.

In February, Martinez filed a complaint in the Makati prosecutor's office accusing the couple of brutality, reckless imprudence resulting in serious physical injury and obstruction of justice.

He said he decided to check out the Galapons' clinic when he saw their website and arrived in the country in March 2005.

Upon meeting Manuel, he said he got repeated assurances that the procedure, which would use "saline gel" or "dermal filler" to enhance the girth of his penis, was safe and that the doctor had successfully performed the same operation several times.

But after the procedure, which cost him P140,000, excluding transportation fees, he said his penis sagged and was "badly deformed."

He said Galapon told him the condition was temporary but the symptoms persisted. Martinez said that when he returned to the US, he was told by a physician that losing injected could lead to gangrene.

Martinez said he consulted another doctor, Marcelino Reyelo Cruz Jr., who subjected his penis to an ultrasound "which confirmed that the injected fat spread from my prostate up to my scrotal and may develop into tumors."

He asked for P20 million in actual damages, P5 million in moral damages and another P5 million in exemplary damages.

Manuel, however, said he had "no malice" and that he took "risks, ramifications and complications" involved in the surgical procedure.

"I did not...during the consultation, guarantee to the consumers...the success of the procedure nor the results thereof," he said.

Lawyers make simple things complicated

ON TARGET
Kenneth Roy

LAWYERS ARE SPECIAL PEOPLE who make simple things complicated.

The more complicated they make of simple things, the happier they are—or so they think.

Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano, chair of the Senate blue ribbon committee, is a lawyer.

So he makes a simple thing complicated.

Cayetano said the investigation into the corrupted $329-million grounty overpriced ZTE-NBN deal found evidence "leading to the Office of the President."

But there is no direct testimony linking President Gloria to the scandalous project.

If there is evidence leading up to the Office of the President, then why is there no testimony connecting PRM to the scandal?

For husband, Mike Arroyo, was directly implicated to the scandal by principal witness Jun Lozada.

Both Arroyo left each other secret things except about their married infidelity.

Aren't the President and Mike Arroyo bedfellows?

The President herself admitted she was told that the project was tainted with irregularities, but she went ahead and signed the deal with ZTE Corp., anyway.

Earlier, former Socioeconomic Secretary Romy Neri alleged that he was offered P200 million by former Comelec chair Ben Abalos so his share in the grossly overpriced project.

So, how could the President not have been involved in the scandal?

* * *

If Senator Cayetano thinks the public will take book, line and sinker his virtual exoneration of the President in the scandal because of his "principal witness" Jun Lozada, he is in for a rude awakening.

Lozada will only corroborate what he said in the Senate and House of Representatives.

He will not testify on matters that he has no personal knowledge of.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard from others.

Lozada will not testify on what he presumed.

Lozada will not testify on what he thought.

Lozada will only testify on what he saw and heard.

Lozada will not testify on what he read in the newspapers.

Lozada will not testify on what he saw on TV.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard on radio.

Lozada will not testify on what he saw in the Internet.

Lozada will not testify on what he saw in the blogosphere.

Lozada will not testify on what he saw in the text messages.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard in the grapevine.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard in the rumor mill.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard in the gossip circuit.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard in the bedroom.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard in the kitchen.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard in the bathroom.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard in the toilet.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard in the bidet.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard in the bathtub.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard in the shower.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard in the sink.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard in the faucet.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard in the water pipes.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard in the water tank.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard in the water heater.

Lozada will not testify on what he heard in the water boiler

UN council pressed to send mission to Zimbabwe

UNITED NATIONS—THE UN Security Council took up Zimbabwe's election standoff for the first time on Tuesday and Western powers pressed for a UN mission on envoy to visit the crisis-stricken southern African country.

Vote-checking from Zimbabwe's March 29 presidential poll was put off again on Tuesday, further delaying the day when the world will know if President Robert Mugabe will remain in power in a once-prosperous country thats is now in economic meltdown.

France's UN Ambassador Jean-Maurice Ripert, told reporters the fact that the Security Council had met to discuss the crisis sent a signal to Zimbabwe's authorities "that we are looking very carefully at what they are doing."

The US and Britain envoys said UN Undersecretary General for Political Affairs Lynn Pascoe had told the closed meeting that Zimbabwe was in the midst of its worst humanitarian crisis since independence from Britain.

"We also spoke about a level of political intimidation and violence that I think many council members found quite chilling," British Deputy Ambassador Karen Pierce said.

Pierce said Britain backed the idea of sending a UN envoy or fact-finding mission and had raised the possibility of a voluntary arms embargo or monetary sanctions on shipments.

Other European countries, Latin American members and the United States also supported sending an envoy diplomats said, but South Africa, which currently holds the council presidency, said such a move was not a matter for the council.

Pascoe told reporters UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon was willing to "use his good offices" in cooperation with African regional groups that are leading mediation efforts.

South African Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo said, however, the question of an envoy was a matter for Ban to discuss with Zimbabwe.

Diplomats have said South Africa was reluctant to have the council take up the issue of Zimbabwe, which President Thabo Mbeki has said should be resolved through quiet diplomacy but acceded to a demand by several council members last week.

The idea of a UN envoy was strongly endorsed by Tendai Biti, secretary general of Zimbabwe's opposition Movement for Democratic Change. In an interview with Reuters, Biti suggested UN official Jesus Tihanjalan, who visited Zimbabwe three years ago to investigate Mugabe's drive to de-

Reuters

Legless lizard discovered in Brazil

OSLO—SCIENTISTS HAVE DISCovered a legless lizard, a toad and a dwarf woodpecker among 14 species believed to be new to science in central Brazil, a wildlife conservation group said on Tuesday.

A four-week expedition to the Cerrado region, a wooded savannah under threat from the expansion of farming, found eight apparently unknown types of fish, three reptiles, one amphibian, a mammal and a bird, Conservation International said.

"The lizard, of the Bachia genus, resembles a snake due to its lack of legs and pointed snout, which it uses to burrow in the soil to search for food," Conservation International, a non-profit group, said in a statement.

Susan Stone, a spokesperson for Conservation International, said the lizard was about 15-20 cm long. Other legless lizards around the world include amphisbaenians or geckos in Australia or slow worms in Europe.

A LEGLESS lizard discovered in Brazil's Cerrado grassland is seen in this undated photo. This species of lizard of the genus Bachia resembles a snake due to its lack of legs and pointed snout. REUTERS

"The lizard was found during the expedition in the Serra Geral do Tocantins Ecological Station, a 716,000-hectare protected area in the Cerrado.

Reuters

Scientists join global research to find cancer-causing genes

TOKYO—SCIENTISTS ACROSS the globe are stepping up the fight against cancer, joining forces to create a first-of-a-kind database of genetic factors, research institutions said on Wednesday.

The International Cancer Genome Consortium was formed by research bodies in nine countries and the European Commission for efforts projected to take up to a decade.

"This is the first large international cooperation" on cancer research at the genetic level, said Tetsuro Okamoto, a research promotion official at Japan's state-backed Riken institution, which is involved in the project.

The consortium will allow research to be conducted internationally without duplication, he said.

"We didn't have a good tool to fight cancer before but now we're seeing the light is revealing its mechanisms at the level of genes," he said.

The project was initiated by Canada's Ontario Institute for Cancer Research and the US National Institutes of Health, he said. Its secretariat will be housed at the Canadian institute in Toronto.

Once thought of as a single disease, cancer is more understood to consist of a large number of different conditions, the consortium noted in a statement.

In almost all forms, however, cancer changes the genetic blueprint, or genomes, of cells, and it creates disruptions within normal biological pathways, leading to uncontrolled cell growth, it said.

Each participating institution will take up one type or subtype of cancer and find abnormalities in up to one, each batch of research a estimated over $26 million.

Eventually a genetic catalogue would allow doctors to zoom patients of risks by analysing their genes, Okamoto said.

"Because genetic institutions are often specific to a particular type of cancer, having a catalogue of them would make it clear for researchers what they should target and how they should fight," Okamoto said. AFP

WorldBriefs

Iraq clashes

BAGHDAD—US forces said they killed 24 militiamen in a Baghdad stronghold of Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr on Tuesday in a series of clashes as a lodging over violent battle that raged for four hours. Doctors at the two hospitals in the Iraqi capital's bastion of Sadr City said they had received the bodies of 21 people killed and 62 wounded. Women and children were among the casualties, they said. Eastern Television footage showed looters pulling the body of a young boy, covered in dust, from the rubble of a two-storey house that had collapsed. It was unclear what had hit the building. The body of another child was seen being brought to a hospital. Reuters

Sanctions vs Burma

LUXEMBOURG—The European Union on Tuesday endorsed US sanctions against the regime in Burma (Myanmar) for another year, adding that the measures could be increased. The sanctions include a travel ban and the freezing of assets of Burma's leaders and their relatives, as well as a ban on arms exports to Yangon. In a statement, EU foreign ministers—who approved the extension at a meeting in Luxembourg—encouraged the international community "to adopt similar measures." AFP

Human trafficking

BANGKOK—Thailand on Wednesday adopted new guidelines to combat the increasing problem of human trafficking in the kingdom, where Burmese Myanmar's migrant workers were found suffocated to death on a truck in April. Thousands of people from Burma illegally cross the border into Thailand each month seeking a better paid job but often wind up exploited by employers. The document, produced in conjunction with the International Labour Organization (ILO), establishes a coordinated response where trafficking is suspected and the rescue of exploited workers is ensured. AFP

Bird flu death

JAKARTA—A 3-year-old boy died from bird flu in Indonesia, marking experts as a potential outbreak of a pandemic that one day could kill millions of people, the Health Ministry said on Wednesday. The toddler's death in Central Java province translated the country's human toll to 103, accounting for nearly half of the 240 recorded fatalities worldwide. He first showed flu like symptoms—high fever and breathing difficulties—on April 17 and died in the hospital five days later, said ministry spokesperson Lily Sulaiyanah. AP

Suicide bombing

KABUL—Taliban militants killed 15 Afghans, including seven civilians, and wounded 41 more in a suicide bomb attack on a long-awaited new bridge in eastern Afghanistan on Tuesday, the interior Ministry said. The bomber targeted an opium poppy eradication team led by the district chief, killed eleven and police officers as they left the local government headquarters in Khogiani, a town south of Jalalabad, close to the Pakistan border. Gunmen opened fire with small arms and rocket propelled grenades following the suicide attack. Twelve police officers and seven civilians were killed, the Interior Ministry said. Reuters

Thai insurgency

YALA—Three policemen were killed on Wednesday in shootings in Thailand's insurgency-wracked south, police said, while two people were killed in other separatist violence. Militants detonated the 20-kilogram device by remote control shortly after midday near a bridge in Yaring district of Pattani province after they forced the police by walking them to a detonation booth, police said. AP

Government warning: Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.

The WORLD

Lilia Lorenzo B. Bunoz

OBAMA

Angry Obama junks former pastor

WASHINGTON—AFTER WEEKS OF DEFENDING THE REV. Jeremiah Wright's good works, Barack Obama heaved his former pastor overboard, hoping to end weeks of damaging controversy that was threatening to sink his historic bid for the Democratic presidential nomination.

A somber-faced and angry Obama told reporters on Tuesday he was outraged and appalled by what he termed a "performance" by Wright at the National Press Club in Washington a day earlier.

The fiery preacher used the highly visible platform to repeat charges against the US government that have blown through Obama's campaign like a storm, since they first came to light last month.

Obama spoke as he was coming off a loss in Pennsylvania to rival Hillary Rodham Clinton and trying to stay even while reeling close return in Indiana and North Carolina in next Tuesday's primary elections.

Obama apparently felt he had no choice but to formally sever ties with the man who said from the pulpit that the United States government caused the AIDS virus to harm blacks, should be damned for opposing African Americans, and brought the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on itself through its own unwise native arrogance.

"I am outraged by the comments that were made and saddened by the

WRIGHT

spectacle that we saw yesterday," Obama said in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

"I think he convinced himself. That made me angry, but also made me sad," Obama told reporters.

Wright had said the US was responsible, some of them made years ago, were not an attack on him but on his black church in America.

Obama flatly rejected the views expressed by Wright, who officiated at his wedding. Inspired his two daughters and had been his pastor for 20 years before his retirement earlier this year. The title of Obama's second book, "The Audacity of Hope," was taken from a Wright sermon.

"What became clear to me is that he was presenting a world view that contradicts mine. I mix and what I stand for," Obama said. AP

AUSTRIAN HORROR

Authorities to give new identities to captive woman and children

AMSTETTEN, AUSTRIA—AUSTRIAN authorities are to give new identities to the woman held prisoner by her father for 24 years and the children she bore in a cramped cellar, to help them escape the trauma of their captivity, officials said.

Police on Wednesday pursued the questioning of Josef FRIZ, 73, who has admitted he fathered seven children his daughter gave birth to in a windowless bunker under the family home, while the victim remained carefully shielded in a secret location.

Psychiatrists and doctors are considering the mother and children on how to come to terms with their unimaginable ordeal. But experts said they were likely to need years of therapy.

"It could take between five and eight years," said Max Friedrich, the psychiatrist who looked after another imprisonment victim, Natascha Kampusch, in an interview with the daily Oesterreich.

The head of the local social services, Hans-Heinz Lotte, said a name-change had been suggested for the incredible victim. And Fritz's other victims as well, in order to give them a new start in life.

"At the moment, all possibilities are being considered, not to ensure ourselves, but with the children's interests in mind," he said.

Friedrich said the children had been told their mother was dead. But a decision will only be reached in the coming weeks," Lotte told a news conference on Tuesday.

Fritz has seven children with his 69-year-old wife Rosemarie. His daughter Elisabeth bore four seven more during the 24 years she was incarcerated in a purpose-built 60-square-metre dungeon where Fritz regularly sexually abused her, according to police.

One of the children died shortly after birth. Three remained with their mother, never seeing natural daylight or the outside world, the other three were adopted by Fritz and lived as his "grandchildren" upstairs in the family home.

Investigators said DNA tests had shown Fritz, a retired electrical engineer, was the father of the six surviving children.

He has told investigators that he disposed of the body of the dead baby in an incinerator in his building.

That admission could prove pivotal as a trial. A prosecutor said Fritz would face a life sentence if found guilty of manslaughter, as opposed to shorter prison terms for rape or incest.

Chief investigator Franz Polzer told Austrian television that police might need "half a year" to complete their investigations. He ruled out any suggestion Fritz might later find an accomplice.

"As our investigations now stand, there were no accomplices. But you can never be 100 percent certain." AFP

Family in captive daughter case had 'astonishing' reunion

AMSTETTEN—LONG-LOST MEMBERS of an Austrian family terrorized by decades of incest and imprisonment had an "astonishing" reunion at the clinic where psychiatrists are helping them cope, authorities said.

Hospital officials said most of the seven children Josef Fritzl fathered over the past 24 years with the daughter he held captive in a windowless cellar spent their first moments together Sunday—a day after their kept confined deadly guard Gisela Arendon.

The meeting was revealed the moment police told the daughter Fritzl had led her to believe left house to join a cult. Relieved, one of a team of international scientists brought in to examine the creature.

"It's the largest known eye in the animal kingdom," Bolstad told The Associated Press.

The squid is the biggest specimen ever caught of the rare and mysterious deep-water species Mesonychoteuthis hamiltoni, or colossal squid. It is 9 meters long and weighs almost 500 kilograms. But scientists believe the species may grow up to 14 meters long.

"I think they will be entirely rivaled predators with eyes like that, and the lens size really phenomenal," said another scientist, Steve O'Shea.

"This is the largest eye ever recorded in history and studied," said Swedish professor Eric Warrant of the University of Lund, who specializes in vision in invertebrates. "It has a huge lens the size of an orange and captures as much light as it can in the dark depths in which it hunts."

They can descend to 2 kilometers and are known to be aggressive hunters.

While scientists have yet to confirm the squid's gender, Bolstad said it was "probably a female, females grow larger in the species, we believe."

It is thought to have enormous strength, with swiveling hooks mounted on its tentacle ends to snare prey. Further up the tentacles, fixed hooks with three sharp points help it hold on to large prey as they are dissected into bite-sized pieces for swallowing. AP

SCIENTISTS examine a showing both as they inspect the eyes of a the colossal squid at Te Papa Museum in Wellington on April 30. The 4-meter long colossal squid weighs about 495 kg and is the largest southern, preserved adult colossal squid in to caught. AFP/NZ

Rare colossal squid has biggest eyes — larger than a dinner plate

WELLINGTON—MARINE SCIENTISTS studying the carcass of a rare colossal squid said on Wednesday they had measured its eye at 27 centimeters (10.6 inches) across—larger than a dinner plate and the biggest animal eye on earth.

One of the squid's two eyes, with a lens as big as an orange, was found intact on the head of the creature after the carcass, which it was slowly defrosted at New Zealand's national museum, Te Papa Tongarewa. It has been preserved there since being caught in the Ross Sea off Antarctica's southern coast last year.

"This is the only intact eye [of a colossal squid] that's ever been found. It's spectacular," said Auckland University of Technology squid specialist Ian

FINAL TRIP

Albert Hofmann, father of LSD, dies at 102

GIMPA—ALBERT HOFMANN, THE father of the mind-altering drug LSD whose medical discovery grew into a notorious "problem child," has died. He was 102.

Hofmann died on Tuesday at his home in Burg im Leimental, said Doris Stoker, a municipal clerk in the village near Basel where Hofmann moved following his retirement in 1971.

Hofmann's hallucinogen inspired —and arguably enraptured—millions in the 1960s hippie generation, but decades after LSD was banned in the late 1960s, Hofmann defended his invention.

"I produced the substance as a medicine... It's not my fault if people abused it," he once said.

HOFFMANN

The Swiss chemist discovered LSD's mind-altering effects in 1938 while studying the medicinal uses of a fungus found on rotten and other grains in the Swedish pharmaceuticals firm in Basel.

He became the first human guinea pig of the drug when a tiny amount of the substance seeped onto his finger during a repeat of the laboratory experiment on April 16, 1943.

"I had to leave work for home because I was suddenly hit by a sudden feeling of unease and mild dizziness," he subsequently wrote in a memo to company bosses.

"Every thing I saw was distorted as in a warped mirror," he said, describing his bicycle ride home. "I had the impression I was rooted to the spot. But my assistant told me we were actually going very fast."

Upon reaching home, Hofmann sat down on a divan and began experiencing what he called "wonderful visions."

"What I was thinking appeared in colors and in pictures," he told Swiss television network SF DRS for a program marking his 100th birthday two years ago. "It lasted for a couple of hours and then it disappeared."

Three days later, Hofmann experimented with a larger dose. The result was a bad trip.

"The substance subtly I wanted to experiment with took over me. I was filled with an overwhelming fear that I would go crazy." AP

N. Korea heading back to famine

SEOUL—SOARING GLOBAL FOOD PRICES AND reluctant donors are pushing North Korea back to near-famine, which could test the unstable government rule even more repressive to keep control, a paper released on Wednesday said.

"The country is in the most serious situation since the end of the famine a decade ago," said the paper from the Washington-based Peterson Institute for International Economics.

Stephan Haggard, who wrote the paper with Marcus Noland, said the sharp increase in world prices for commodities had sent ripples through the communist state's economy.

The authors join specialists in isolation North Korea's inside while also outside world.

"The North Korean rice market is much more integrated with world markets than most people think," Haggard, a professor at the University of California, San Diego, said by telephone. Reuters

WHAT'S INSIDE
So still in charge; GM Antonio rises /B26

SPORTS
Editor Sheldyves S. Matienzo Assistant Editor Francis T. J. Ochoa
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Spurs, Hornets collide in semis /A27

Knights trip Altas; Eagles clip Blazers

LANCE HORDIT (Cochrane, San Jose)
[illegible]

By Marc Anthony Reyes

REYMAN UITEMAN AND JOHN SHELIGAN, in his crucial three-pointers in a wild finish as Lorenzo mentored Perpetual Help Dalta Sys-tem's fourth-quarter rampage to salvage a 63-59 triumph yesterday and post its first win in the second Filoil Flying V Invitational Cup at The Arena in San Juan.

PHU, the Altas' threatening to upset their NCAA foe, Cardinals sparked a 7-2 winchup with a two before Shelegatio added his own triple to secure the Knights' first victory after two matches in Group A.

Shelegatio hit his trey with 1:0 seconds to 0, with what We pressed down to 0-4.

Perpetual, seeing to secure its first win in three games, grabbed the lead with three minutes left when John Philip Lelahin hit a three-pointer for a 57-56 lead.

In the ensuing game, Rube-10 Romanos cop-scored with 17 points, while Chris Tio added 14 as Arizona defeated St. Bridde, 79-75, for its third win in five games. The Blazers fell to 1-2.

SEAN Co (left) with his son of Pharex's go-to guys.

Pharex battles Burger today

HAVING BROUGHT DOWN BURGREY leader Harbour Centre, Pharex confidently shoots for the second quarterfinal berth against Burger King today at the close of the PBA Lipovitan Amino Sports Cup eliminations at the Cuy. Ayong Maliksi gym in Trece Martires, Cavite.

If the Medics can sustain the intensity they showed in storming down the erstwhile unbeaten Burgers Pict, 89-97, last Saturday, they would be a very difficult assignment for the Whopper when they clash at 1 p.m.

Another factor going for Pharex (7-3) is the fact that Burger no longer needs a win, having sealed the first quarterfinal slot and a twice-to-beat bonus with sixth-round.

But in the event that Burger King pummels over Pharex, Jun-ming Coffee will secure the second twice-to-beat bonus because of its better quotient in the running three-way tie at 7-4.

Harbour and Super Toothpaste, the outright semifinal qualifiers as the top two teams in the eliminations, collide later at 3 p.m. with only pinstripe at stake.

The Medics are expected to bear the Whoppers relying heavily on his Sukalapa, Don Villarmin, Sean Co and Jun Alibal, who dominated the lolling blows against the Burgers Pict.

"We rotated the ball as well and are played hard on the defensive end," said Pharex coach Carlo Tan of their game against Harbour.

Meanwhile, the league will hold its own version of the All-Star Showcase on Saturday when sixteen stars return to Pio Strata in San Juan, according to commissioner Chito Trinidad.

Two will be competitive in stars duels, already challenge and three point shooting. Napoles Gobe Norwood is the favorite in the stars duel, while Harbour's James Castro is the team to beat in the obstacle.

Marc Anthony Reyes

Slingers owner here to sign Castro

By Jeanlore M. Reyes

TEAM OWNER BOB TURNER WILL arrive in the country today with the intentions of topping the services of topnotch amateur Jason Castro as reinforcement for the Singapore Slingers.

Turner opened the PBL Most Valuable Player during a training stint of the Harbour Centre-Philippine team's team in Singapore last year.

The Slingers, who are active in the Australian National Basketball League, are also planning to scout several other local players aside from the Harbour Centre guard.

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RP Youth five debuts vs host Malaysians

By Jeannice W. Payo

MALAYSIA—NATIONAL COACH NONOY Panlasigui had talked about his team's selection countless times. And the medal-thirsted mentor can only hope that the country's young and fierce hoop talents have picked up his message.

"We're going into the competition with only one thing in mind, and that is to try to win the gold," said Panlasigui. "I hope we can really perform up to par and deliver when we're supposed to do."

The Nokia Philippine Youth team hits the international floor for the first time Thursday night in the Southeast Asian Basketball Association Division 2 championship for junior men here, with Panlasigui believing his players have shaken off their pre-tournament jitters.

"I'd like to think the players are more confident now," said Panlasigui. "It's one of the things we were looking for during our (tuneup) games the past months."

Panlasigui's experience is tough talent for his hoopsters from such defending champion Malaysia in their 8:30 p.m. tussle at the Malaysia Amateur Basketball Association gym.

The match comes after the inaugural game between Thailand and Indonesia at 6 p.m. and the 30-minute opening ceremony. Singapore sits out the first day of the four-nation romp.

The young nationals—spearheaded by team-captain Frank Golla Jr. and tall Filipino foreigners Norbert Torres and Kyle Montalbo—haven't seen their first opponents despite practicing in Bukit Lanjan since Monday.

Malaysia is reportedly led by naturalized 6-foot-7 player Alexander Sidwell, plus a couple of 6-6-ers.

"We have some idea, but we're not entirely sure how they play and what's their strength," said Panlasigui.

Manuel Joseph Maraña, Mark Joel de Guzman, Gabriel Bitoal, Jed Manigbas, Bryan Rhoen Uanzia, Jan Sanggalang, Joseph Tiruz, Jaypee Mendoza, Joseph Tabilisma round up the 12-man roster. Reserves are Mark Lopez, Jover Mendoza and Philip Paredes.

Although the 18-under lineup is a mix of UAAP and NCAA standouts, the squad is mainly pinning its hopes on the 6-7 Torres and 6-5 Pascual, two foreign high school stars with Filipino roots who have been with the team since last month.

"I'm confident of our chances," said Torres, the 18-year-old recruit averaging five blocks a game for Mother Teresa High School in Toronto.

Identical PBA bids by Solar, ABS-CBN

IN HUDDLE

Beth Celis

ONE OF THE more cryptic lines during the long table discussion between the PBA board of governors and the media on the eve of the PBA All-Star game was the statement from the

For sure, the press wanted to know the status of the bidders—Solar, ABS-CBN and the last to submit a letter of intent, Making Network owned by businessman-sportsman Hermie Esguerra.

All some of the media also cracked for figures. Are the chosen governors Eddy Vargas and Ruben Nue would divulge sum that the amounts submitted by both Solar and ABS-CBN were almost the same.

At this point, Nolasco said there are other matter considerations in the league's decision of a source other than finances.

Later I found out that both Solar and ABS-CBN had submitted identical bids of P.045 million for the first year, P1.60 million for the second year and P1.70 million for the third year.

The final season (2007-2008) of ABC-5's contract with the PBA only netted the league P70 million.

* * *

The board was divided on the matter of the thinking bid. While some governors felt that it was too late for the new network to join the bidding race, others believed that all interested parties should be given an equal opportunity to present their proposals. After all May 31, the deadline imposed by the board, is itself for choosing the television source, is still a month away.

The board will have to reach a consensus on this.

If there are questions on the seriousness of their intent, Makidig's Esguerra said they could make a presentation in one week or even three days.

"I assure you that we're no mahirap bidder," he said.

* * *

That night, we learned from elected congressman Nonoy Parentorella who is also weightlifting president, that he is running for POC presidency in December. That will make it a four-cornered fight between Parentorella, incumbent Peping Cojuangco, ambassador's Robert Aventajado and Ateneo's Go Chan.

He also learned that Nonoy is running for Bacolod mayor in the mid-elections against the incumbent, Evelio Leonardia. Monico and Leonardia, whose political careers started simultaneously, are married enemies.

They both ran for a council seat initially Leonardia finishing first, Monico second. Then they both ran for vice mayor with Leonardia getting the post.

I did not see the two greet each other at the gym the following day. One thing is certain, Monico was not warmly applauded by the politicos when he presented an acknowledged by the program emcee.

* * *

Jack Raby, commissioner of the 2008 Burlington Celebrity and Corporate Cup, is working all avid skiers like and basketball fans to watch the opening-day game between the celebrities and CEOs on May 3, 11 a.m. at Ohio Arena in San Juan.

"This will be their chance to see some of their favorite singers and actors perform live for free, inside the handcourt," Jack said.

Among those included in the celebrities lineup are Sheila Cormicle, Rachel Alejandro, Yoyoy Villame, Arthur Espiritu, Gerard Salonga, Jay Glazer, Jr. Calvin Millado and Bobby Yeo.

The other teams participating in what Jack describes as "a special league within a league" are Gerry's Grill, Popoy's Grill, Topolo Grill, Phoenix, Anaheim, AIESEC, Accel, Subic Bay Bridgestone, Grand Hyatt, Wapee TimeDispatch and the PBL press troops.

* * *

HOOPINGS: A round of news might have been established in Bacolod. Due to the persistent dance of the round, led by Bacolod mayor Evelio Leonardia, the fourth-month All-Star game, which ended in the wee hours of the morning, was definitive games that end in a tie are declared co-champ and end right there. ... Boss Jessy Hernandez, Eugene Tejada's ex-girlfriend, came from Bacolod? Strange that one people from this place should inform me that she is now married and pregnant. ... Two sources said Eugene and Jessy have not necessarily broken up when he returned to the US. They said Jessy had even gone to San Jose to visit Eugene. ... My favorite portion during the PBA All-Star week was the dance session dished out by the North All-Stars to the tune of the Pagara theme. They have hands down their Southern counterpart who performed a rap number.

Fiba affirms SBP backing

By Jeannice W. Payo

THE INTERNATIONAL BASKETBALL FEDERATION (Fiba) reinstated yesterday its support to the SBP-banished Basketball 5g Filipinas following completion on the current leadership headed by presidential relatives, international tycoon Manny V. Pangilinan.

In a statement by Fiba after its executive meeting from April 28 to 28 in Beijing, it noted "The Fiba General Board received reports on elite targeting activities in the Philippines. The Fiba General Board has reaffirmed its support to the 5th/Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas for and its leadership."

BAP chair and Commissioner Sec Sup. Luis Villafuerte had reportedly sent letters to Fiba, by alleging questionable disbursement of funds by the SBP/ABC.

Meanwhile, the General Board approved the creation of the Fiba World Club Championship that will feature the world's top eight club teams starting in October 2009.

The participating clubs will include the organizer, one representative each from Asia, Africa and Oceania, and two teams each from America and Europe.

Zoleta siblings make Lucena tennis semis

JANUSTES BAMBE AND REBI ZOLETA scored contrasting win on Wednesday to reach the semifinal round of the Lu Gov. Arnulfo C. Alcala Memorial Cup Midland Open at the Lucena City Tennis Club courts after duel wins.

The top-seeded Bambi ripped Allyna Collin, 6-0, 6-1, to advance against Ana Mikaylene, 6-2, 6-3 winner over Irish Bahia.

Rebi, seeded fourth, outplayed Bills seed Trudy Antoniazo, 6-4, 6-4, to forge a semifinal showdown with fellow Bagan, who seemed a 6-0, 6-1 victory over Jennylyn Magpayo.

In the other matches, the fifth-seeded Alexander Lazaro rallied past Mario Sabas, 6-3, 6-4, 6-2, to book the first quarterfinal berth in the P150,000 event.

Second round winners were No. 3 Rolando Real Jr. over Pablo Olivarez II, 6-4, 6-2, 5-0 (ret.); No. 4 Yannick Golez over Michael Trocio, 6-0, 6-1; and No. 8 Ralph Bersabe Bacio over Jaschiek de Castro, 6-1, 6-1.

So still in charge; GM Antonio rises

Standings after seven rounds:

Men: 11 points—IM Ito Jr., 5-1, 6 pts.; 8—E.Antonio, 5-1/Sevar, 5-1/Ochoa, 5-1/Bitik, 5-1/Cruquejan, 5-1/Abad, 5-1/Bolivar, 5-1/Li Santos, 5-1/IM Villamayor, 5-1/Gonzales.

Women: 6 points—Lopez, 5-1/Garcia Gay, 5/Jose, 4-1/Shelly Dee, 4-1/Serrano, 3.5-1/Salvador, 3/Gonzales, 2.5-4/Magat, 2-5/Bonoan, 0/Montero, 1.5-6/Palomar, 0/Guzman

* Advanced round

INCUMBENT GM ANTONIO WESLEY SO AND closest pursuer Eugene Torre opted not to rock the boat last night, giving Jerry Antonio the chance to gain ground in the 2008 Battle of GMs at the City State Hotel yesterday.

As So and Torre settled for draws, Antonio flashed blood fury here to down three-time national junior champion John Paul Gomez and vault back into contention with 4.5 points after seven rounds of play.

The 46-year-old Antonio, the pride of Cologan City Oriental Mindoro, exploited the white pieces to beat Gomez in 36 moves of the French defense and sixth client in Torre, who has 5.0 points and So (5.5).

So split the point with National Master Rolando Bolito after 66 moves of the Sicilian while Torre drew with Cebu based International Master Richard Bitoon in 49 moves of the Queen's Gambit to keep their 1-2 positions.

A teary-time national champion, Antonio rebounded from his loss to So in the second round to catch up with Bitoon and Gomez.

Singapore-based International Master Julio Catalino Sadorra crippled IM Nicole Dargantes in 36 moves of the Queen's Defense to break a three-game skid and climb to 2.5 points.

Sargasian and Soler remained at 3.5 points with four rounds left in the tournament organized by the National Chess Federation of the Philippines.

Other results saw NM Rayvel Mondoñedo (2.0) downcast "Young" Villamayor in 49 moves of the Center Counter and NM Oliver Barbosa shook NM Jayvee Gonzales in 41 moves of the Ruy Lopez and Barbosa had 3.0 points each.

In the women's division, Catherine Perena downed Ranneree Magno in 36 moves of the Ringo Indian to pad her lead to 6.0 points on five wins and two draws.

Shelly Gay leased erstwhile co-leader Shen Jose in 34 moves of the Queen's Gambit to climb to 5.5 points, just half a point off her victim. In other games, Cyley Lemiel Bersabe downed Kimberly Gamoso in 32 moves of the Sicilian and Cherielee Camacho crashed Beverly Mendoza in 44 moves of the Scotch Gambit.

WESLEY So continues to hold sway in the Battle of GMs.

Slingers...

From page A23

"He has served the country and Batangas' Center well, so it's time for him to look for a better opportunity to himself," said Batang Pier owner Mikee Romero.

"If he gets a good contract, he should grab it. Anyway he's still young," added Romero.

Sports officials said the 5-foot-8 Castro, a former Philippine Christian U star, may fetch $80,000—$85,000 for a seven-month stint.

Best Center uses JRU gym

JOSE RIZAL UNIVERSITY OPENS its last-quadrining new arena to conducts its BEST Center Basketball Efficiency and Scientific Training Center's students starting May 5.

Always the pioneer in basketball clinics in the country makes its home of the Heavy Bombers its newest clinic its growing list of venues.

This will be the first time the Mile-sponsored BEST Center uses a PBA hall of Fame arena like, will be calling home this newly built venue.

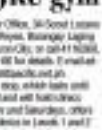
Interested parties can visit the BEST Center Office, 36 Sorsal Lozano corner 3rd. Floors, Barangay Lapog Hotels, Quezon City, or call 411 9261, 372 0000 or 60 for details. E-mail us: thomas.bestcenter@yahoo.com.ph.

The 3-day camp, which lasts until May 28 and will still hold clinics Wednesdays and Saturdays, offers basketball clinics in Levels 1 and 2 for students 8-years-old and above.

Classes will be held from 1-4 pm.

BEST also offers volleyball clinics at the Montalban Corporate Center Mines and Metropolis Tiles Alabang.

Go jots down 'drag' double



GO Stepping up

ROMABEL BATANGLAS—TEAM BEST ASchassy Go pulled a double victory recently to the fourth leg of the 2008 thin title Coffee Drag Racing Championship at the Batangas Racing Circuit Drag Strip.

The big crowd leading harvested to another record breaker as Go, a member Tia got disappointed as a busted engine booted him out early in the race and stopped his winning streak.

Go took over his Team Bee and stunned his rivals in the quarterfinals to reach the Quick 8 division.

He clocked 12.300 seconds, topping Team Fun Ang's Jose Bernardino, who crossed the finish line in 12.809 seconds.

Carlo Evangelista of Group 10 Motosports clocked third in 13.478 seconds.

Go later bagged five victories in the Pro division over lady driver Whea Dagandon of Team Yamaniro, clocking 12.684.

"I'm very happy I made it double today after finishing third in the past legs," said Go.

Ravena son powers Blue Eaglets

GIANP POWER HOUSE ATENEO held off a late Lyceum charge for a 66-60 victory in the Mighty Sports Filipino-Chinese Basketball League (FCBL) Prexys Junior Cup at the Philippine Basketball Association Academy gym.

Greber Ravena, son of former player, led the Blue Eaglets with 19 points while Ivan Enriquez added 14 for the team's fourth straight win in as many games. The Squires scored their first defeat in three games.

Archer Torres had a game-high 26 points for Lyceus but was not enough to save his team absorbing its first loss in the tournament also supported by Debbie Chaikowsky, Mighty Hing, Fg. First Team Sports Mfrg., Glysian Inc., Chocher Packaging Tape and Chamber Communications Supply.

In other games, Jose Rizal University scorpetted NCAA heavyweight San Beda, 73-63. In its second win against one loss, while University of Santo Tomas demolished Philippine Christian High School, 99-57, to improve 1-1.

Draw crucial for Beijing Olympic bets

By Jun Navarro

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—LUCK OF THE draw.

That, according to PF Olympic chief of mission Monico Puentevella, will be the decisive factor that underscores Jess Tabumfar Jr. and Mario Antonnette Rivero and Irene Ivany Talamoc face in their respective campaigns in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

"The draw is a big factor," said the first vice president of the Philippine Olympic Committee yesterday. "If we don't meet the Chinese along the way, there will be something big waiting for us."

Talamoc, the country's lone qualifier in boxing, made it to the Olympics as second-runner up in China's Zou Shi Ming in the 48-kilogram (light flyweight) finals during the World Boxing Championship last year in Chicago.

Zou, who won the title here, 17-3, is the heavy favorite for the gold in August. The 27-year-old Chinese, also the light fly world champion in 2005, was bronze medalist in the 2004 Athens Olympiad.

Puentevella said a favorable draw could also work wonders for Tio and Rivero, who are in their second Olympic stint after falling short of a medal in Athens.

Go made the Olympic grade through the world taekwondo championships in Manchester, England last year while Rivero secured a second Olympic ouster of duty through the Asian qualifying in Vietnam six months ago.

Other Olympians are swimmers Miguel Molina, Ryan Arabejo, Daniel Coakley, JB Walsh, Cricket Strauss, divers Ryan Retzel Bebiqui and Abella Mae Perez, black archer of archery and trap shooter Eric Ang.

Karambola sa Parañaque

THE FIRST KARAMBOLA SA PARAÑAQUE billiard tournament opens today at the Fruit Sports Center in Don Galo.

Organized by the Parañaque government, the 28April-aged 18 years old and below from the city's five district. 57 Colleges and Education Centers and visiting hosts Gregorio Resources Philippines, Inc. are backing the first leg of the two-day event being held for the benefit of the Batang Paulakaye Foundation. The second leg is slated on May 16-17 for the city's second district players.

Spurs, Hornets dispatch foes, collide in semis

SAN ANTONIO—TIM DUNCAN was not all smiles after the San Antonio Spurs eliminated the Phoenix Suns yet again from the playoffs. Written on the big man's face was only one thing: relief.

"Sure happy we're done with them," he said.

Really, nowhere ever any doubt?

The Spurs dispatched the Suns with a 92-89 Game 5 victory Tuesday in what has become almost a postseason ritual for the defending champions.

The veteran team moves on to the Western Conference semifinals against the No. 2 seed Hornets, led by playoff rookie Chris Paul, to a rubber date begins Saturday in New Orleans.

Paul had 24 points, 15 assists and 11 rebounds, and New Orleans held on to win its first-round series against Dallas, taking Game 5, 99-94, at home.

The Suns go home again, falling in their postseason exit chorus (Game's second straight year and the fourth time in five playoff appearances.

"We went up against a team that knows how to win," Suns coach Mike D'Antoni said. "Every time we needed to close something out—a half or a game, they got the best of us. That's why they're champions."

Ronaldo had 20 points and 17 rebounds and Tony Parker scored 21 points for San Antonio. They were the only Spurs to score in double digits.

Boris Diaw, who had a near triple-double in the Suns' race of the Spurs in Game 4, led the Suns with 22 points. Amare Stoudemire had 15 points and 11 rebounds and Shaquille O'Neal added 13 points.

"Every year it seems like we always play the Spurs, and they lose on every single time," Stoudemire said. "So long as I'm here we're going to break it season or later, because I'm tired of losing to these guys."

Five Suns players scored in double figures and they outshot the Spurs from the field, but they had a number of costly turnovers down the stretch.

With the Spurs up 88-87 after battling back and forth with the Suns throughout the fourth quarter, Manu Ginobili, who had been cold all night, hit one of two from the line, 20 seconds on the clock.

Steve Nash couldn't get a field of Raja Bell's inbounds pass, and Phoenix sent Ginobili to the free again, 15 seconds left. Ginobili both that time for 91-87.

Nash's triple try missed and Duncan his number three (Game Diaw's last-second floor missed, but it wouldn't have made a difference.

It was widely predicted that this might finally be the Suns' year—that they were hungrier than the aging Spurs. Early on, it delivered with a Game 1 double-overtime thriller that the Spurs won after a couple of clutch free-throw-pointers.

San Antonio won its second game at home, then really took control of the series by rolling over the Suns in Phoenix in Game 3.

Phoenix tried to become the first NBA team to come back from a 0-3 deficit, and they were Game 4 in Phoenix with game. They stayed in Game 5 until the end, trying to force a Game 6 back in Phoenix.

Instead, the Suns go home, falling don't despite the midseason blockbuster trade for O'Neal—who was brought in specifically to snatch up

SAN Antonio guard Tony Parker celebrates after the Spurs ousted the Phoenix Suns in the Western playoffs.

twelve with rookie Hot San Antonio.

Rockets 95, Jazz 69

At Houston, Tracy McGrady scored 28 points, Luis Scola added 16 points and 11 rebounds, and Houston moved off elimination by routing Utah in Game 5.

Dikembe Mutombo grabbed 10 rebounds as the Rockets cut their series deficit to 3-2 and forced Game 6 in Utah on Friday night.

Now, the Jazz can end the series at home, where they were 37-4 during the regular season. But Houston was the first team to lose Utah in Salt Lake City during the regular season and won Game 3 there last Thursday.

Pistons 98, 76ers 81

At Auburn Hills, Michigan, Chauncey Billups scored 21 points, Richard Hamilton had 20 to lift Detroit to a 3-2 lead over Philadelphia in its first-round series.

Detroit leads in the series for the first time after being the first team to win consecutive games.

If the Pistons win Game 6 in Thursday in Philadelphia or Game 7 at home, they will be in the playoffs for the seventh year in a row. AP

Ex-Indonesian champ says RP badminton has bright future

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE FILIPINO BADMINTON PLAYER has a lot of potential, but lacks the focus to excel in the sport.

Former Indonesian national champion and multi-titled player Rudy Gunawan made that observation Sunday, a month after conducting a summer clinic for young Filipino players.

"Filipinos have a very good chance of becoming world champions, they have many potentials," said Gunawan, who's handling the Alfred Ang camp in Club 656 in Libis. "If only they could find very good coaches."

Gunawan, brother of Indonesian icon and Olympic gold winner Ilony Susanti, said badminton "belongs to Asians" and the Filipinos can also excel in the sport.

He is staying in the country until the end of May as part of an Asics Official Sports Technologies plan to come up with a badminton academy in Asia.

"We'll open up the academy this year, and hopefully we can have a satellite here in your country," said the 28-year-old Gunawan, former Poland and Finland Open champion, who is now a coach.

Ironically, speaking through his interpreter, Fr. Antonio Bernyeretta, has singled out two Filipinos who will get scholarship to the academy—Melvin Anne Venier Alcala, 12, and Gelica Castillo, 15.

Until the academy is put up, Alcala and Castillo will undergo training at the prestigious Jaya Raya Club, Indonesia's top-tier girls badminton club which's produced world and Olympic champion Ilie Susy.

Gunawan said Alcala and Castillo "are already Indonesian caliber."

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2. The participant must visit the promo site (or SMS to 2966 for Globe/Touch Mobile) and type in the Gatorade Promo Code and other instructions.

Example: GATORADE (Code)

3. After the first entry, subsequent, the participant will enter an alphabetical code (may be changed from time to time) and the mechanics will be the first entry.

Example: GATORADE (1st Entry) and type in Gatorade (Code) (Space) (2nd Entry)

4. The participant will need to register his valid information or validated online entry, mobile number, with his/her name and address and will be considered as online entry.

5. Promo is available to promo and nationwide on Jan. 2009. The participant will receive a confirmation message. Gatorade may not be responsible for any other SMS charges that may be incurred by the participant. Any person who will violate any rules of the promo shall be disqualified from winning any prize and shall be subjected to the full force of the law. Gatorade reserves the right to disqualify any participant who violates any of the rules and regulations of this promo.

6. Promo is not available to any minor (below 18 years old) or employees of Gatorade and its affiliates, subsidiaries, and their immediate families.

7. Each participant can enter as many times as he/she wants but he/she can only win one (1) prize per day. Participants can only win a maximum of 7 prizes per week.

8. Winners will be announced on the promo site (or SMS to 2966) every Monday (time).

9. Winners will be notified via SMS and/or e-mail and/or phone call. Winners will be required to claim their prizes at the Gatorade Booth at the Mall of Asia Arena on Jan. 2009 (date and time to be announced). Winners will be required to present a valid ID and sign a receipt upon claiming their prize.

Verification of Winning Entries:

1. When a new Mass. the participant wishes to enter the Semi-Grand Draw (subsequent and subsequent prizes), he/she will be required to be validated at the Office Activity representatives (TBWT), authorized Mall (any) agency, the Ayo NBA Teams.

2. As part of the valid verification process, the Text Entry may be randomized with Gatorade Staff.

   a. Confirm with the promo agent name if the participant's name is the same as the mobile account. (All cases are unique)
   b. Inform the participant that he/she is the winner and to be valid name, verification process and validation process will be carried out.

3. Upon complete verification, the Text Entry representative will call the winner to confirm that they will claim the prize and inform on the time they were claiming, as their prizes (thousand of Gatorade and the winning code) (prize(s) may...). In addition, (Gatorade) may require a copy of their ID (if necessary) to have been with the signature of the Text Entry Representative and other representatives as well as prize at time.

4. Prizes may be awarded only upon completion of the entire validation process, resulting in the subscriber being qualified for a duplication and/or valid account.

5. The Text Entry will inform the Mall of the final winners after verification and any disqualified for winners (and) reasons (for disqualification).

Announcement of Winners & Claiming of Prizes:

1. Winners will each receive a confirmation call and letter after the verification process. The Gatorade representative may not be responsible for any other SMS charges that may be incurred by the participant. Any person who will violate any rules of the promo shall be disqualified from winning any prize.

2. To claim the prize, the eligible winner must go to the nearest Mall and Mall Booth or Text Entry and present proof of all Gatorade items in sealed or intact conditions with the original receipt.

   a. Use the provided mail unit or the scanner by the winner(s).
   b. Text (Gatorade code) (space) (1st winning promo code). The (up and down) scanner shall verify the authentication sequence.
   c. Text (1) (quality acceptable proof) (1) (proof) (date, month and year, name and address of winner) to (Gatorade) (1) at (text) (name, phone) (08.15). (The winner is unable to present valid identification, he/she must be able to submit an affidavit executed by a local community.)
   d. Once the affidavit is signed by the winner(s), (date of validity) is verified by the authorized representative.

3. Once the proof is verified, the Text Entry representative will call the winner to confirm that they will claim the prize and inform on the time they were claiming, as their prizes (thousand of Gatorade and the winning code) (prize(s) may...). In addition, (Gatorade) may require a copy of their ID (if necessary) to have been with the signature of the Text Entry Representative and other representatives as well as prize at time.

4. Prizes may be awarded only upon completion of the entire validation process, resulting in the subscriber being qualified for a duplication and/or valid account.

5. The Text Entry will inform the Mall of the final winners after verification and any disqualified for winners (and) reasons (for disqualification).

Announcement of Winners & Claiming of Prizes:

1. Winners will each receive a confirmation call and letter after the verification process. The Gatorade representative may not be responsible for any other SMS charges that may be incurred by the participant. Any person who will violate any rules of the promo shall be disqualified from winning any prize.

2. To claim the prize, the eligible winner must go to the nearest Mall and Mall Booth or Text Entry and present proof of all Gatorade items in sealed or intact conditions with the original receipt.

   a. Use the provided mail unit or the scanner by the winner(s).
   b. Text (Gatorade code) (space) (1st winning promo code). The (up and down) scanner shall verify the authentication sequence.
   c. Text (1) (quality acceptable proof) (1) (proof) (date, month and year, name and address of winner) to (Gatorade) (1) at (text) (name, phone) (08.15). (The winner is unable to present valid identification, he/she must be able to submit an affidavit executed by a local community.)
   d. Once the affidavit is signed by the winner(s), (date of validity) is verified by the authorized representative.

NOTE: Prizes cannot be claimed if all the items mentioned above are not presented.

3. Upon proof of winner, the Text Entry representative will call the winner to confirm that they will claim the prize and inform on the time they were claiming, as their prizes (thousand of Gatorade and the winning code) (prize(s) may...). In addition, (Gatorade) may require a copy of their ID (if necessary) to have been with the signature of the Text Entry Representative and other representatives as well as prize at time.

4. Prizes may be awarded only upon completion of the entire validation process, resulting in the subscriber being qualified for a duplication and/or valid account.

5. The Text Entry will inform the Mall of the final winners after verification and any disqualified for winners (and) reasons (for disqualification).

Prizes:

Grand prize (1 pair) consists of a round trip economy class ticket for two (2) to the 2009 NBA All-Star Weekend Experience and one thousand five hundred (1,500) dollars cash allowance for the Philippines to be drawn on April 30, 2009 at a date and time.

Head No.	Draw Dates	NBA Jersey	Trip to The NBA
1	May 11, 2009		
2	May 18, 2009		
3	May 25, 2009		
4	June 1, 2009		
5	June 8, 2009		
6	June 15, 2009		
7	June 22, 2009		
8	June 29, 2009		
9	July 6, 2009		

Details of the Grand Prize:

1. The All-Star Game Package consists of the following:
   - Round trip coach class economy ticket for two (2) to the 2009 NBA All-Star Weekend Experience and one thousand five hundred (1,500) dollars cash allowance for the Philippines to be drawn on April 30, 2009 at a date and time.
   - Accommodation for two (2) nights at a hotel in the vicinity of the All-Star Game
   - Transportation to and from the airport
   - Tickets to the All-Star Game
   - Tickets to the All-Star Weekend Experience
   - Access to the All-Star Weekend Experience
   - Access to the All-Star Weekend Experience
   - Access

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- RP seeking $300M in soft loan from ADB /B6

BUSINESS
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PNB, Allied sign ₱62-B merger deal

Fourth biggest bank with assets of P388B

By Doris C. Dumlao

PHILIPPINE NATIONAL BANK and Allied Banking Corp., both controlled by tobacco magnate Lucio Tan, yesterday approved a P61.8-billion merger deal that will create the country's fourth biggest bank through an exchange of shares in the third quarter of this year.

Top PNB and Allied Bank officials announced in a press briefing that under the merger structure approved by their respective boards of directors yesterday, PNB will issue 417 million new shares as PNB each in exchange for 100 percent of Allied Bank's commonized preferred shares.

PNB, which will be the surviving entity, will issue 140 new shares for every Allied Bank common share and 38.73 shares for every Allied Bank preferred share.

The deal valued PNB at P216.6 billion and Allied Bank at P35.2 billion. The sum of nearly P62 billion thus represented the total deal value, according to Manuel Salak, country chief of ING Bank NV which acted as financial adviser on the merger.

As of yesterday, PNB had a market capitalization of P48.5 billion. Its share price went up by P2.50 to close at P30.50 at the Philippine Stock Exchange ahead of the merger announcement.

"The merger will have a positive impact on the overall financial performance of the new bank given their complementary client base, enlarged distribution platform, strong capital position and expected synergies," said PNB president Chona Ryan Mez, who was also nominated by the shareholders to head the merged bank.

The union will create the country's fourth biggest bank with combined resources of P388 billion, boosting PNB's current 10th position.

After the merger, the Lucio Tan group will end up with 86.7 percent control, with the balance representing the public float.

Allen said that given the combined bank's strong capital adequacy ratio at 13.21 percent, one of the highest in the industry and way above the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' minimum requirement of 10 percent, there was no immediate plan to expand the ownership structure after the merger.

The integration process is expected to

PNB, ALLIED to

Inflation seen at 6.4-7% in April

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS expects consumer prices to have risen at a month-fastest pace of 6.4 to 7 percent in April due to escalating food and fuel prices.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. yesterday said the year-on-year inflation rate would likely climb further this month from the 26-month high of 6.4 percent in March given the continued increase in oil and metal commodity prices.

"The powers rate adjustment to April is also expected to push inflation higher," Tetangco said.

He reiterated that the BSP would remain "vigilant" for any early signs of second-round effects...referring to additional price

INFLATION to

Lopez group sells Medical City stake to foreign fund manager

By Dazel L. Lucas

THE FLAGSHIP HOLDING FIRM OF THE Lopez family has sold its entire stake in The Medical City—one of the country's newest and most modern hospitals—as part of its efforts to pare down debt.

In a statement to the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE), Benpres Holdings Corp. said that it had sold its 39 percent stake in Prosperland Services Inc., which is the owner and operator of what is also one of the country's most established medical institutions.

Benpres president and COO Angel Ong said the income that the company had sold its stake to an affiliate of equity fund manager Lombard was P1.04 billion.

Company officials told the business that the sale was made as part of the holding firm's ongoing effort to dispose of its "non-core" assets. The scheme calls for Benpres to liquidate its noncontrolled holdings in raise cash that would, in turn, be used to repay debt under its ongoing rehabilitation plan.

Benpres' stake in the hospital operation has been on the selling block "for some time now" but was sealed only recently after the Lopez firm and the prospective buyer agreed on the pricing terms.

Benpres owes $360 million and P1.16 billion to various local and foreign creditors. It

LOPEZ, B2

Filinvest Land to build medium-rise buildings

By Dante L. Lucas

PROPERTY DEVELOPER FILINVEST Land Inc. will expand its project portfolio to include more medium-rise buildings as part of its plan to broaden its client base this year.

In a report to its shareholders meeting, the Gotianun family-controlled firm said that it would launch the medium-rise buildings in the "inner city" locations of Santolan in Pasig City and Sta. Mesa in Manila.

"The company intends to continue pursuing an aggressive growth strategy for its mid-income business by expanding its existing townships and launching additional medium-rise building projects in Metro Manila and other regional urban areas and new affordable and middle-income residential projects in 2008," it said.

According to the firm, the Santolan project, named One Oasis, will have a total sales value of P800 million, while the first building of the Sta. Mesa project under the same name, will have a sales value of P144 million.

The second building of the One Oasis project in Ortigas City — also set to be launched this year — is expected to raise P250 million for the publicly listed real estate firm.

Its biggest project to be launched this year is a middle-income development on the Marcos property in Tagaytay Road, which will have a total sales value of P900 million. The high-end Barapan Cove project in San Mateo, Rizal, meanwhile, will raise for the company P815 million over fully sold.

"Going forward, Filinvest Land expects to remain focused on its core residential real estate development business, which now includes medium-rise buildings," the company said.

"However, as a result of the acquisition of ownership interest in certain investment properties, Filinvest Land has diversified its real estate portfolio to include retail and office investment properties that generate recurring revenues," it added.

This year, Filinvest officials said the company intends to launch 26 new projects and additional phases with an estimated sales value of P16.2 billion. This is 66 percent more than the sales value of projects launched in 2007.

"Batasan City (Quezon city) is now Filinvest's newest provincial location," it said.

"Negotiations are [also] ongoing for a high-rise building in Makati City," the company added, without providing more details.

Various buildings in Ayala-operated Cebu come in Mactan are also being constructed to increase the leasable spaces and leasing revenues in 2008.

"Continuous improvements are also being made to North Gil Mall in Mandaluyong City[to keep up with market demands," the company added.

Earlier, the company said that it would allocate up to P6 billion for capital expenditures this year as part of efforts to retain its growth momentum as the local economy starts to feel the effects of the global slowdown.

Last month, Filinvest Land reported an audited net income of P1.7 billion for 2007, or 95 percent higher than the net earnings of P872 million in the previous year.

Atlas Mining profit up 500%

By Amy R. Nuevo

LISTED FIRM ATLAS CONSOLIdated Mining and Development Corp. yesterday reported that its consolidated net income surged more than 500 percent to P289 million in 2007 from P47 million recorded in the previous year.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, the mining firm explained that the better performance was prompted principally by the higher revenues generated by the firm's nickel subsidiary, Berong Nickel Corp., which started direct shipping operations in Palawan in the early part of 2007.

Considered as the fourth biggest source of nickel ore deposit in the world, the mining site in Berong, Palawan, is under a joint-venture partnership among Atlas, Toledo Mining Corp. and Australian mining firm Inventia.

Atlas reported that its consolidated revenues surged to P1.31 billion in 2007 from P64 million recorded in the previous year.

Of this, some P1.23 billion can be attributed to Berong's sale of saprolite and limonite ore equivalent to 530,868 wet metric tons, at an average of 1.33 percent nickel. These were shipped to Australian and Chinese buyers.

Meanwhile, Atlas said that interest income earned from interest-bearing deposit instruments rose to P90 million in 2007 from the P548,000 the previous year.

It explained that proceeds from the $100-million loan secured by its copper subsidiary Carmen Copper Corp. from Deutsche Bank comprised largely the deposit accounts of the group.

Atlas also reported that cost of sales amounted to P117 million last year.

However, the firm's general and administrative expenses rose to P934 million from P389 million in 2006. Atlas explained that this was attributed mainly to Carmen Copper, which is currently rehabilitating its mine facilities in Toledo City, Cebu.

The rehabilitation is nearing completion and the mine is expected to come on stream in the latter part of 2008, the disclosure stated.

Electric cheer

BREAKTIME

Comrade K
Rawat Ili

THE BAD NEWS WAS THAT OUR electric bills should increase by about 67 centavos a kilowatthour (kwh) this month.

That should be another political black-eye for this core administration.

Pesos say, if nowhere, experts expect that the government was set to take over Meralco, which has been under the control of the Lopez group.

A trusted man of the kids at the Palace is more reported in the preparing to sit in the Meralco board, apparently to tackle it some.

But behind the cover about the government takeover of Meralco is a subtle message to the public from Malacañang. The rate increase was the fault of Meralco.

Hmmm ... We may as well curse the newsboy who delivers the newspapers than carry the bad news.

Come on, more than anything else, the electricity rate increase has a lot to do with all the stealing in that state monopoly Napocor under this core administration.

* * *

BEWARE political issues, of course, are hitting this core administration one after another. Rice crisis, the power rate increase, and—more—inflation issues.

This administration better have somebody else to blame, right?

The last bugbear: electricity bills. Since it no other more visible bill gets from Meralco. Our bills come from Meralco, right?

Alright, Meralco: it handles in earning our electricity connection when we bid to pay our monthly bills, but it is not the main cause of the rate increase.

Official figures show that, out of the rate increase of about 67 centavos a kwh, the power-generation cost alone comes up to about 52 centavos a kwh.

Now, the thing to watch in the power rates is the so-called Wholesale Electricity Spot Market, or WESM, which is akin to the stock exchange. It is where everybody in the power sector goes for open trading of electricity supply.

Last February, the price of electricity at the WESM was only P3.91 a kwh. The following month it jumped to P13.68.

Now the biggest generator of electricity in the country is still—guess who?—the one and only Napocor.

This state monopoly financially bleeding corporation still controls more than 70 percent of the country's generation capacity.

Last March, the price of electricity from Napocor and WESM was about P7.20 a kwh.

In comparison, the price from the independent power producers (IPPs), which are actually the private companies, was only P5.20 a kwh.

That, if you ask me, and not the Palace propagandists, is a big difference.

* * *

WHAT DOES the increase of 67 centavos a kwh mean to us, anyway?

Well, the average per capita consumption of electricity is 280 kwh a month, which means an increase in the monthly electric bill of P120.

That is equivalent to about 5 liters of rice. Every month! For each and everyone in the metropolis!

Now, about 70 percent of the households in Metro Manila consume less than 200 kwh a month.

Meaning, that if they cannot afford to use up more electricity they hardly have enough money for food.

I am afraid that, thanks to the increase in the electricity rates, a lot of people will have to cut back on food money.

It's an equivalent of the electric chair for us, sure, but I guess it is also bad politics for the Lola at the Palace.

* * *

AS WE have been saying all along, the increase in electricity rate was only a matter of time.

During the summer months last year, for instance, we were so lucky to suffer those "brownouts," again, courtesy of our beloved government monopoly Napocor.

Some lawmakers claimed the power shortage was merely artificial. They said then that the Napocor outfit was only out to justify their emergency purchase of high-priced coal from abroad.

It was a crisis situation, right? Okay a fake crisis situation!

Earlier this year, some genius in Napocor again forgot to consider the welfare of people in this country that can still boast of having the second highest power rate in the whole of Asia, and he awarded a bit contract for coal supply to a new company with capital of only enough for a motorcycle—second hand, at that.

It was an extremely overpriced contract, of course!

And we never heard a word from this core administration about it.

Either the Palace is covering up for the Napocor outfit, or somebody is feeding the kids some darkly wrong information.

* * *

AND SO now the Palace seems to be moving to take over Meralco. Who will run the company then? The same scoundrels who run Napocor in the ground?

Everybody has been saying that, instead of taking over private companies, the government should be doing the exact opposite and get out of the power business.

That is the intent of the Epira, the law for restructuring the power industry which requires Napocor to reduce its control of the country's power generation capacity in at most 20 percent.

Again, the groups hurting for the government to follow the Epira are the Semiconductor and Electronics Industries in the Philippines; American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines; Australian-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce Philippines; Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines; European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines; Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry of the Philippines; Korean Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines; the Philippine Association of Multinational Companies Regional Headquarters and the Philippine Independent Power Producers Association.

Those, in other words, are huge investors in this country.

And who wants to change the Epira to have the Napocor outfit? Well, only some of our beloved lawmakers! With the blessing of some palace boys!

BPI posts 53% decline in first quarter profit

By Doris C. Dantes

Both interest and non-interest income contracted from year-ago level

THE BANK OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS yesterday reported a 53-percent decline in net profit in the first quarter, as rising interest rates swamped revenues growth from its BPI kept a tight lid on expenses.

The bank posted a net profit of P1.5 billion in the first quarter, lower than the P3.2 billion recorded a year ago. Revenue fell by 26 percent even as operating costs declined by 6 percent in the same period.

In a statement, BPI pointed out that last year's first quarter profit was difficult to replicate given a P416-million nonrecurring gain on a property sale booked by its investment subsidiaries during the period.

In the first quarter of this year, the bank's revenue fell as both interest and non-interest income contracted from year-ago level, despite P28 billion in average asset base growth.

"While BPI registered significant year-on-year loan growth, the more complex operating environment impacted the bank's profitability," the bank said.

BPI said the 200 basis point cut in the US Federal Reserve rate during the period caused a decline in the bank's foreign currency asset yields.

"The rising interest rate scenario provided limited opportunities to generate securities trading gains," the bank said.

But BPI said it had sustained the growth momentum of its various core businesses, with net loans increasing by 14 percent from the level in the previous year, almost all the industry's 40 percent growth.

Business segments which reflected notable results were the middle market, small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs), and consumer with growth rates of 18 percent, 16 percent and 23 percent, respectively.

Housing loans remained the main driver of consumer loan growth with new loans granted in the first quarter increasing by 96 percent, boosting the outstanding portfolio by 56 percent. Credit card billings likewise increased by 28 percent. Lending to the top corporations was, however, flat if compared to year-ago level.

In the meantime, deposits created by 4 percent to P470 billion from the previous year, but these stood 7 percent below the year-end level. Asset managed by its trust department grew by 24 percent to P275 billion.

"For the moment, given the deteriorating world financial markets, the bank intends to keep its balance sheet flat while allowing its premium clients to shift their investments to high-yielding investment alternatives," the bank said.

HEGAMOLD FVP for business development Join Ge (right) and SVP Ge view the supply chain Marietta Cristostomo (left) stands near the interior of one of the initial five buses of CityLink in between the firm's bus transport system. The bus system, which is an inaugural one in a really will service points connecting workers of Eastwood City, Cyberpark, McKinley Hill in Fort Bonifacio and Newport City at Villamor Air base. CityLink is a subsidiary of Megaworld affiliate First Oceanic Property Management Inc.

iRemit declares cash dividend

By Doris L. Luca

PUBLICLY LISTED iREMIT INC. HAS DECLARED its first cash dividend since its shares started trading on the local bourse, marking a milestone for the largest Filipino-owned remittance transfer firm.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, the company said it would spend P22 million to pay dividends to its shareholders on or before June 10, 2008.

"The declaration of cash dividend serves as a new milestone for iRemit," company president and COO Herbi Arriola said in a statement. "It reflects the company's maturity, sustained financial strength and healthy cashflow."

The company told the bourse it would pay 5.91 centavos for each share held by stockholders as of May 15, 2008.

The dividend yield of the current market price of the company's common stock of P3.18 is 1.9 percent, while the dividend payout ratio is 19.4 percent.

Last month, iRemit Inc. reported that its 2007 net income rose by 107 percent to P113.29 million, from only P45.5 million in the previous year.

The company's delivery fees—accounting for the bulk of its revenues—rose by 98 percent from P225 million in 2006 to P447 million at the end of last year due to the increase in the number of transactions at its remittance center overseas.

The total number of remittance transactions last year reached 1.864 million compared to only 1.384 million in 2006, representing an increase of 2% percent.

The company said it also earned a substantial amount from foreign exchange gains due to the strength of the peso against the US dollar. These gains grew by 55 percent from P2.25 million in 2006 to P194 million last year.

The total volume of foreign exchange handled in 2006 amounted to $500 million, then grew to $766 million in 2007, representing a 37 percent growth.

Last year, expatriate Filipinos sent home at least $14.4 billion in remittances, according to the central bank.

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Deposit Amount	Interest Rates*			
In Pesos	30 Days	90 Days	180 Days	1 year
100,000 - 499,999	3.000	3.500	3.625	3.750
500,000 - 999,999	3.250	3.750	3.875	4.000
1.0MM - 4.99MM	4.000	4.500	4.625	4.750
5.0MM and up	4.250	4.750	4.875	5.000

Hurry! Join now for a minimum deposit of P25,000 only. Promo runs up to July 31, 2008.

Peso Time Deposit

NGO cites 7-Eleven chain

By Ronnel W. Domingo

A GROUP OF ADVOCATES FOR TOBACCO control yesterday lauded the 7-Eleven convenience store chain for its promptly heeding the call to remove cigarette advertising banners that were displayed outside the establishment's premises, but said this is not enough.

Marissa Limpin, executive director of Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Alliance Philippines (FCAP), said in a statement that Philippine Seven Corp. was "quick to respond" to the group's complaint.

FCAP is a non-government coalition of doctors, medical students and health groups working to curb "the tobacco epidemic."

Two weeks ago, FCAP threatened to file criminal charges against Philippine Seven and cigarette maker Fortune Tobacco for allegedly violating the ban on outdoor tobacco advertising.

Limpin said in a statement dated April 22 that the non-renewal of cable-vision contracts by 7-Eleven outlets in Metro Manila, prompting FCAP to file a complaint with the Inter-Agency Committee on Tobacco (IAC-T) which the Department of Trade and Industry heads.

She said the display of the banners contravenes the rules stated in Section 22 of Republic Act No. 9211 [or the Tobacco Regulation Act of 2003], which published outdoor tobacco advertising effective July 1, 2007.

Limpin said Jose Victor Paterno, Philippine Seven president and chief executive, informed FCAP through a letter dated April 22 that the non-renewal of cable-vision contracts was "in effect" for the past 30 days after receipt of FCAP's April 10 letter.

The letter cited 7-Eleven stores along the avenues of Roxas Blvd., Taft, Ayala and Quezon in Quezon City and the streets of Ortigas, Mon and Paterno in Sta. Mesa, Manila.

She said FCAP's team had confirmed the pullout of the cigarette banners in the stores cited in the letter after random monitoring of 7-Eleven outlets.

Lopez ...

from page B1

was found to enter into a rehabilitation plan after the 1997 East Asian financial crisis weakened the peso and raised the company's debt servicing burden.

The sale of Benpres' stake in Medical City is, however, a gain for the holding firm whose initial investment in the hospital was only P200 million—or a gain of 200 percent.

Medical City doctors led by Senior Health Secretary Alfredo Bengzon control 40 percent of the hospital. The rest is held by other partners such as Manila Electric Co., Bell Inc., Insular Life Assurance Co., United Laboratories Inc., the Ayala Development Bank, Inc. Miguel Corp. and the Mercury Group of Companies.

The hospital is a P5.1-billion specialty [illegible] on a 1.5-hectare medical complex along Ortigas Avenue in Pasig.

Benpres' Gog Ilas previously said that the company was looking to dispose of its interest in Manila Health Management Corp. (MHTC) as well as its stake in Bayan Telecommunications Inc.

Republic of the Philippines
PROVINCE OF LA UNION
San Fernando City

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF LA UNION, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers, contractors and consultants to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following contracts:

NAME OF CONTRACT	LOCATION	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT (in Pesos)	CONTRACT DURATION
5 units MOTOR VEHICLE	Provincial Government Complex, Brgy. Catbangen, City of San Fernando, La Union	For sale to the Office of the Governor	4,800,000.00	60 days

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last 2 years with an amount of at least 50% of the prospective project for bidding. The Eligibility Documents as well as the pre-bid meeting, bid opening and post-qualification activities shall be conducted at the Provincial Capitol Compound, Brgy. Catbangen, City of San Fernando, La Union.

All participants shall pay a Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of the Documents	May 5, 2008
2. Pre-Bid Conference	May 5, 2008, 9:00 AM, BAC Conference Room, Capitol Bldg. SFC
3. Opening of Bids	May 19, 2008, 9:00 AM, BAC Conference Room, Capitol Bldg. SFC
4. Notice of Award	May 21-28, 2008
5. Post-Qualification	May 21-28, 2008
6. Contract Signing	May 21-28, 2008
7. Notice to Proceed	May 21-28, 2008

Bid documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of P2,000.00 to the Office of the Provincial Treasurer's Cashier.

The PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF LA UNION reserves its responsibility exclusively to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of its bid.

(Sgd.) DR. GEOFFREY S. TILAN
BAC Chairman

PD No. 1445

Republic of the Philippines
PROVINCE OF LA UNION
San Fernando City

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BAC Chairman

PD No. 1445

Invest more in agriculture, UN FAO urges nations

By Amy R. Remo

Rising food prices can be seen as opportunity to reverse trend

THE UNITED NATIONS FOOD and Agriculture Organization urged the international community to seize the chance to boost agriculture, adding that high food prices, while they pose a threat, can also be an opportunity.

In a statement, FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf said that while the world should take immediate action to cushion the current world food emergency, it must also seize the opportunities offered by higher food prices to prevent similar situations from occurring in the future.

"The time for re-launching agriculture is now and the international community should not miss the opportunity," he said.

According to FAO, high food commodity prices call for a "twin-track approach" featuring policies and programs to assure the millions of poor and help farmers in the developing world take advantage of the new situation.

"We must produce more food where it is urgently needed to contain the impact of soaring prices on poor consumers, and simultaneously boost productivity and expand production to create more income and employment opportunities for the rural poor," Diouf said.

He added that there was a need to ensure small farmers' access to land and water resources and forestall impact such as weeds and fertilizers.

"This will enable them to increase their supply response to higher prices, lessen their vulnerability to future price swings, improve their livelihoods and ultimately benefit consumers as well," Diouf explained.

Diouf warned that while high food prices exacerbate food insecurity and create social tensions, there was a danger of this emergency – overshadowing longer-term concerns.

"To ensure that small farmers and rural households benefit from higher food prices, we need to create a favorable policy environment that relaxes the constraints facing the private sector, farmers and traders," he said.

Diouf explained that this simple means governments should invest more in the agriculture sector or "reverse the decline in the level of public resources spent on agriculture and rural development."

Currently, farmers in the developing world have to battle environments including lack of infrastructure such as transport and communications, access to technology and innovation services and well-functioning marketing and credit systems.

Diouf said that a low lack of infrastructure, facilities and feeding, farmers also have to battle low buying prices for paltay.

Diouf recalled that when food prices soared in the '70s, many Asian governments chose to invest in irrigation and agricultural research, thus creating the conditions for rapid productivity growth that saved millions from poverty and hunger.

A similar response is urgently needed today he added.

S&P says Asia to grow despite US recession

SINGAPORE—ASIA'S ECONOMY WILL BE resilient in the face of a US recession thanks to the regional locomotives of China and India, but the pace of economic appreciation will slow, Standard & Poor's said yesterday.

Asia's exports would take a hit as the world's largest economy slips into a recession, reducing the amount of dollars entering these economies that would fuel rises in their currencies, said Subir Gokarn, Standard & Poor's chief Asia-Pacific economist.

Still, Asia-Pacific ex-Japan would still grow 6 percent or more in 2008 and 2009, he said.

BAP forecast the US economy would shrink 0.3 percent in the first quarter and 0.9 percent in the second. The United States is due to report first quarter GDP figures later on Wednesday.

"What we are arguing is that the Asian region has developed within itself very strong drivers for growth, which tends to offset the influence of the weakening US economy," Gokarn told reporters on a conference call.

Chinese and Indian demand for goods from the rest of Asia would offset some of the impact from weaker US demand.

Intra-regional trade would also be boosted by a spate of free trade pacts that have been signed, he said.

He forecast China's economy was likely to grow between 9.5 percent and 10 percent in 2008, supported by solid consumption and investment, before slowing to a range of 9 percent to 9.5 percent in 2009. China's economy grew 11.9 percent in 2007.

The forecast India's economy will grow between 8.2 percent and 8.7 percent in 2008 and 7.5 percent to 8.4 percent in 2009, from growth of 9.4 percent in 2007.

But inflation risks pose a threat to the region, with some states central banks facing limited room to ease policy to spur economic growth at the time of slowing exports, he said. Reuters

Asian stocks await Fed move

HONG KONG—INVESTORS REACHED FOR a US interest rate decision on Wednesday but remained alert for any value shares in the cheap market, snapping up Japanese flat panel TV maker Matsushita and Mitsubishi Steel after robust earnings.

The US Federal Reserve, which is widely expected to announce another two-cut package, could also signal that the easing cycle has run its course for now.

That could rekindle fears cropping up even deeper borrowing but it could also draw a line under the financial crisis, since the Fed's rush to slash more has reflected widespread investor panic about the fragile health of the US economy.

Pinning market hopes on this awaiting US gross domestic product (GDP) data later in the day. According to a Reuters poll, the report is expected to show the US economy limited sharply in the first quarter, growing at its slowest pace in five years, as consumers curbed spending and jobs disappeared.

The Fed is expected to trim rates by a quarter percentage point to 2 percent, which would take its total rate cuts over the past seven months to 3.25 percentage points, but may also signal that its easing cycle is done for now.

The potential loosening-out of the US rate cycle, coupled with rising inflationary concerns globally, caused a slump in bond prices last week as investors suddenly changed their view of the future path of interest rates.

But bleak US consumer confidence and housing sector data revived investors' appetite for US Treasuries on Tuesday, and Japanese government bonds followed suit on Wednesday, easing additional support from a weaker-than-expected reading on Japanese industrial production.

Japan 10-year JGB futures rose 0.36 point to 136.15 in light trade ahead of Japanese holidays early next week. Reuters

FERRYBOAT/ named PH-001, the first ship built in Subic is undergoing outfitting at Hanjin's shipyard at the Redondo Peninsula. The vessel is scheduled for delivery to the Greek owner in June.

First Subic-built ship to set sail in June

By Bernard W. Dizenzo

THE SUBIC BAY METROPOLITAN AUthority yesterday said that the first ocean-going vessel built in Subic is being outfitted in preparation for delivery to a Greek shipping company in June.

SBMA chair Feliciano Salonga said yesterday in a statement that the $66-million vessel was made ready in less than a year after Hanjin Heavy Industries Corp.-Philippines first cut the steel used in building the ship at its Redondo Peninsula shipyard.

"Other shipbuilders would have taken at least 18 months after cutting the steel, to launch the same size of ship," Salonga said.

The ship was temporarily named PH-001 and would be formally named by President Macapagal-Arroyo as soon as outfitting and sea trials are completed.

The Greek firm Dioryx Maritime Corp. placed one of the first orders of vessels with HHIC-Philippines, which started production in Subic on April 19, 2007.

Salonga said the ship was designed for an optimum speed of 24.5 knots or more than 45 kilometers an hour and is the first of six 6,300-TEU (20-foot equivalent unit) vessels ordered by Dioryx.

Another 10 vessels of similar specifications are also being built in Subic.

He said that with the price of $66 million a ship, the lineup of orders runs a total of close to $1 billion, of which 40 percent is to be spent on salaries of workers at the Hanjin shipyard.

Salonga said further that this means a P400-million contribution to the local economy, which critics of the controversial Hanjin apartment complex being built in the former US Navy ammunition depot should realize.

One of the world's biggest shipbuilders, Hanjin has invested some $1.7 billion for its shipyard project in Subic, which now directly employs at least 5,000 workers, not counting those hired by its subcontractors.

The company is planning to build a bigger shipyard in Mindanao to accommodate more orders for new ships.

Sulu's response to global food crisis

MINDANAWORLD

Ayi Sagun Kiaw

THE ESTIMATED HALF A MILlion Tausugs in Sulu are scraping themselves for a different kind of war.

From well-oiled automatic rifles and smoke grenades, the Tausugs on the island are now picking up farm implements to save themselves from a looming food crisis.

The island of Luuk, which literally means "low elevation," was established in 1968 when Muse Romdon, a very famous Tausug warrior, fought against the government.

Luuk is part of Jolo, which is among the poorest in the country and down there on the lowest development index.

It is ironic that the people here are named in poverty when it is in accessible in natural resources.

Agricultural revolution

To solve its problem with food, the Tausugs here are in the midst of what they call an agricultural revolution and are planting hundred of hectares of farms with cassava, corn and vegetables.

People here know very well that they can always eat cassava if the supply of imported rice comes to trickles. Cassava is their staple, not rice, so the farmers here are hopefully addressing their problem.

The local government led by Mayor Abdulmisuan Adtoni rallied the people to engage in livelihood projects, like tilling their lands and planting them with cassava and other crops. Adtoni said that in the event of a global rice shortage, people in Sulu would not worry anymore, as they can always go back to their staple, which is cassava.

Since they have an abundance of it, they can even export the product if needed.

Aside from planting cassavas, fisherfolk in the coastal area are also concentrating on lobster (ngor) and grouper (lapu-lapu) culture.

The only fishpond in Sulu is found in this coastal town. Manning it are people from Bolod in the Tausug tribe are also teaching banyan culture to the locals.

Banyan are known in the Visayas to be industrious and experts in cultivating freshwater seafood like tilapia and sugpo (prawns).

The Tausugs are not used to eating freshwater fish, but since these varieties are now available, they have learned to eat them.

Developments in Sulu

Through the usual mix of diminishers, Sulu is enjoying some relative peace and order.

Armies ready connecting the armies on sunday municipalities are now under construction and expected to be in operation before the end of the year — a welcome respite from the dirt roads which large potholes.

Lalanza Park , a few hundred meters away from the Sinsilab Bato Port, is also nearing completion.

When operational, the park's centerpiece will be a water fountain. Colored light bulbs will be installed in fountains the waters.

The lighted fountain of the Sea, on the other hand, has a walkway to accommodate early morning joggers and sunset lovers who are expected to troop to the area. Opposite the boulevard will rise a sports complex complete with basketball and tennis courts.

Nine commercial stalls around the area are expected to be built to accommodate native goods and products to be sold at low prices.

Hala had learned the visit of two heads of states, two Philippine presidents, President Macapagal-Arroyo and former President Joseph Estrada, and the son of the Great Libyan Arab Jamahiriya Ltd. Moammar Khadafi.

Personally, Sulu is one of the areas in Mindanao that continues to attract me. I know so many business people who really want to go and explore Sulu and see for themselves the economic progress that is now happening there.

I tell them that the time has come to do it.

(My thanks to fellow Mindanaon Ed Gomez of Mindanews for information in this column.)

(Ayi Sagun Kiaw is an advocate for the development of the island. He is chair of Ayi Sagun Foundation, Philippine Girl Scouts Alliance, Mindanao Tech Fee Schools Association, Mindanao Rep, Export Development Council and environment. Ayikiaw28@yhoo.com).

PNB, Allied sign P62-B merger deal

From page B1

take a year or two to finish, but the definitive information memorandum are expected to be filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission by May 19 and shown final approval from shareholders by June 24. Regulatory approvals, including that from the BSP, are targeted to be obtained by July.

"The merger will enhance our competitiveness in the banking industry and widen our reach to customers with more products and services offerings, which will help create shareholder value," Allied Bank president Reynaldo Martinez said.

The bank expects to realize savings equivalent to 4.6 percent of combined net income and 10.12 percent of the combined cost base.

Mar said the merger would result in cost-efficiency improvements through branch consolidating, economies of scale, systems integration, realignment of front-office and optimization of back office processing and support functions.

The cost-to-income ratio of the combined bank is estimated at 66 percent, which means it spends 66 centavos to earn a peso.

"We will bring that down and our target is to lower that to 50-55 percent," Mar said.

The target is likewise to achieve a return on equity of 15 percent within five years.

The union will result in a combined distribution network of 626 branches and 614 ATMs nationwide, the third biggest network in the country.

The merger is also seen boosting the bank's overseas remittance business given its international footprint of 124 branches and offices across Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East and North America.

Inflation seen at 6.4-7% in April

From page B1

pressures from wage and transport fare adjustments.

Last week, Reuters said the BSP would be ready to tighten interest rates when it sees inflationary pressures spreading.

He said the government's minimum wage-inflation rate of 7 percent this year was "clouded with risk" but the target range of 2.5-4.5 percent was still "achievable."

During its meeting last week, the BSP's policymaking Monetary Board kept its benchmark interest rate, the overnight borrowing rate, steady at 5 percent to avoid letting additional money fly were to reinforce the strain of interest rate cuts on since last year's that one aid to inflationary pressures.

New York-based think tank Global Source says the country's inflation rate reaching an average of 6 percent this year.

"Wage pressures, for instance, have already begun to build as prices of office and construction elements to earn, and as workers demand more prompted by the President to assess the possibility of pay increases," Global Source said.

The research firm said a "best-case" scenario of 5.5 percent would still be achievable if world fuel and food prices soften and inflation expectations remain well-managed.

However, it said a deceleration in commodity prices appeared unlikely as the economy grows right supply and strong demand conditions as well as the speculative play on commodities towards markets.

"Monetary authorities can no longer rely on the mechanism for strong peso appreciation to scale down price increases this year," the research firm said. Boris C. Evarlao

People, Events & Products

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Ford hosts 'Summer Shakedown' in May

FORD GROUP PHILIPPINES SPEEDS UP this weekends with "Ford Summer Shakedown" at the Bonifacio Global City Open Fields in Taguig City. On May 3 to 4, and May 17 to 18, experience the ultimate test drive with all the Ford vehicles and get a chance to win exciting prizes.

Experience the exceptional power and performance of the Ford Focus, Ford Escape, Ford Everest, Ford Ranger, Ford Explorer and Ford Expedition on both paved road and a thrill-raising off-road track. Also, drivers crossed the wide passageways of the open grounds of The Fort with your favorite Ford vehicle, and get a feel of its driving stability, precise steering and handling grip.

Conquer your fears and go to the "Extreme Drive," a challenging off-road test on board Ford's signature 4x4 vehicles, known for their excellent engine power, torque, towing capacity and durability.

Test the Ford vehicles' capability with "Drive across with a twist," the first phase of the off-road track, where rounds will be strategically placed on each side of the path where the wheels travel. This will make the vehicle bounce on uneven side with a twisting effect on the chassis, wheels will demonstrate how much and durable Ford's 4x4 vehicles are. The obstacle will end with a roller bed positioned exactly under opposite wheels to simulate a slippery condition, which will show off the vehicles' limited slip differential, delivering optimum off-road traction.

Cool down the vehicles' tires with a drift-free drive in the next phase of the track, and find out how how versatile they are. With superior ground clearance and variable ground-to-wheel torque that virtually eliminates torque lag, the Ford vehicles deliver smoother and more sensitive-to-use, superb ground clearance.

Shift to high gear for the next phase, the "log bridge," and allows the Ford's 4x4 vehicle massive torque move them forward. Watch as the vehicles' enormously sturdy suspension and excellent engine torque and suspension balance take over while you focus only on steering.

Slide to outdoor cross with the "tree conveyer," the off-road's next feature. To demonstrate the Ford vehicles' unparalleled suspension that delivers a refined ride, drivers will travel on logs cut in different lengths that will be parted upright in two parallel lanes, simulating an off-road condition.

As a final step, maneuver on the "Ford table top," a steep and narrow slope that will show off the 4x4 cars vehicles' superior torque, toughness and limited slip differential.

Adding a dose of excitement, the test drive event will be packed with fun activities for the whole family. Put your athletic skills to the test with traffic challenges and rope-holding challenges, which demonstrate the sporty and outdoor personality of the Ford SUVs. Keep the kids busy with coloring and face painting activities. A live band, hourly raffle and trivia games will complete the weekend entertainment.

Ford Philippines and its marketing franchise Lee says this event brings to life Ford's promise of making vehicles that our consumers' lifestyle, are a joy to own and, make their every day exciting. Catering to various discriminating needs of the consumers, the Ford vehicles come in all sizes and provide more options in terms of engine and drive train for all types of customers – from single young professionals, to adventurous families, and enterprising entrepreneurs.

"We make every day exciting for consumers by making trucks that put the fun back in work and are a reward for a job well done, making SUVs that make every day adventure, and by delivering vehicles that seem like a world among and reaching even that against the drudgery of the every day commute, with the intense thrill of driving," Lee said.

The Ford Escape – Ford's small SUV dedicated to young and mobile urbanites – provides a quick getaway from the weekly grind, with its sporting personality and maneuverable size. The Ford Everest, on the other hand, serves as reasonable ride for active families. The Ford Expedition and the Ford Explorer, represent Ford's supremacy in the SUV business.

The Ford Ranger, a three-time Pick up of the Year winner, already demonstrates Ford's car-like, tough attitude for customers who prefer a rugged, tough ride mixed with comfy skills great than work to play. The "bargain-ugly fun" Ford Focus embodies the speed and passion of street to track technology, with its latest innovations including the first Focus TDCi sedan.

Catch all the Ford vehicles in action in The Fort this May! The "Ford Summer Shakedown" is in partnership with Ray Burton and Pepsi. For more information, you may call 889-FORD (3673).

CARLSON HOTELS SUPPORTS SM FOUNDATION

Singapore-based Carlson Asia Pacific – the holder of over 1,000 hotels in 66 countries, during a recent signing of a management agreement with SM Hotels and Conventions Corporation (SMHC). Under the management agreement, Carlson Hotels will manage two new hotels under the Regent and Radisson brands. The structure will be built by Antel Spectrum Inc, a subsidiary of SMHC, within the Mall of Asia Complex. Shown in photo are Carlson Asia Pacific president and managing director Martin Hak (fourth on left) with Carlos Angeles, executive director, SM Foundation Inc and Merrill Yu, treasurer-MIS, senior vice president, hotel investment group of SMHC.

SUN CELLULAR JOINS THE AMI ALLIANCE

Sun Cellular recently formalized its membership in Asia Mobility Initiative (AMI) Alliance, the first mobile alliance in Asia. AMI, a "not for profit" gathering body of the Chairman Philip Salonga Mendoza, AMI Alliance now spans across 11 countries with the following mobile operators as members – Celcom (Malaysia), DiGiCT Plus (Brunei), Smartmobile (Indonesia), Idea Cellular (India), Mobile One (Singapore), SmartTone-Vodafone (Hong Kong) and Sun Cellular (Philippines), with this regional partnership, Sun Cellular aims to bring its subscribers to unchartered roaming experiences, additional value-feeder services, and exciting promotions. The alliance is also working on new programs that will benefit the many Filipinos working in members' countries. Photo shows Sun Cellular CEO Clarence A. Lim and AMI Alliance executive officer Jim Tai Tobias Chan signs a Memorandum of Agreement witnessed by (from left) Celcom CEO Datuk Seri Tengku Azzman Shah Tengku Mahmood; Sunbeam Team Tindakan Sdn Bhd Executive Director Jeffrey Wendt Sukawan from Thailand; Telekomunikasi Indonesia director of commerce Joy Wahjudi from Indonesia; Idea Cellular managing director Sunjeet Kapur and their marketing officer Sanjeev Aggarwal from India; Mobile One chief technical officer Patrick Sudaliar from Singapore; and Smartone Vodafone director technology officer Stephen Chow from Hong Kong.

Year 5 for The Real Bank's saving advocacy

PEAs Elementary School pupils, joined by their teachers, show off their Mga Ibonte ni Jim-Ayala savings bank. The Real Bank is just one of the over 100 schools that is part of the saving and financial literacy program of The Real Bank.

SOME OF ITS FIFTH YEAR AND GOING stronger, The Real Bank announced the nationwide scope of its advocacy on saving and thrift-ness for the school year 2008-2009. The comprehensive school program is a tri-partnership of The Real Bank, Department of Education and Mary Lindber International since 2003.

"The Bata...Bata...Ating-impok at Magsimay" trailblazing project is being implemented in elementary schools in the National Capital Region, Region III and IVA and now it has added public and private schools in the Visayas and Mindanao region increasing their scope from 45 to 100 schools.

"The Real Bank and I, as the Lolo Pepe is all this, are so humbled by the tremendous response of the children and the teachers. I am happy and honored to announce as well that we have elevated the program as the Real Bank's legacy – gift for the leaders of tomorrow. For indeed, there is no greater fulfillment than knowing that you have imparted knowledge and inspired them with the right values to accomplish their goals and live a wonderful chapter of the brand 'The Real Bank.'

The Real Bank pioneering progress is designed to help instill intellectually and emotionally to students the discipline of thriftiness, saving and the wise use of resources. It builds the knowledge base of the children with considerations and materials that the bank itself created with the storytelling book "Mga Ibonte ni Lolo Pepe ng Pag-impok at Pagsisipag" as the favorite and most requested.

Bata...Bata...Ating-impok at Magsimay" has been reaping awards from international and local award giving groups like the first four years of the program, it has garnered eight recognitions. The second school-wide contests (book-report/ poster) in the fields of visual arts and creative writing, that for The Real Bank the reward is the impact of its advocacy to the pupils and the increase in scope would-be-good to the upsurge of program beneficiaries whose sense of values of savings and thriftiness will pave the way to a stronger and more secure tomorrow.

Product FILES

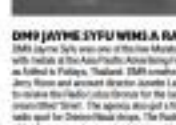
Fuji Xerox new printers

FUJI XEROX PHILIPPINES introduced the DocuPrint C1110B and DocuPrint C1110 to meet the burgeoning demand of SMB users who are looking for quality colour printouts in a low cost and easy to use package. Both are the industry's first A4 compact laser printers that deliver the fastest colour print speeds in its class. Its surprisingly small footprint belies its powerful features – both printers boast Fuji Xerox Printer's ease-of-use and service engine, a powerful 533MHz processor, standard 128MB memory and print resolutions of up to 9600 by 600 dpi. The first-page-out and warm up time to play the fastest in the market for its category. Recognizing SMBs' needs for easy-to-use products, both DocuPrint C1110B and DocuPrint C1110 also the fastest innovations design that simplifies the process of replacing an empty toner. The printer driver is specially designed for the SMB market. Its simple plug and play installation process eliminates the need for an IT specialist during set up. The Fuji Xerox DocuPrint C1110B and DocuPrint C1110 colour laser printers are available in the market through authorized retailers.

MARCOMMASIA 2008 AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTER

MCV MARKETING and Consultancy and Lopez Inc. sign international barter recently organized biannual conference 2008, the first international conference and convention on marketing communications in the Philippines, at the World Trade Center Metro Manila is known Sept. 25 - this conference 2008 will showcase the latest products and services in marketing communications to practitioners and invites Asia Pacific region. The show will feature the latest and the best in all communications, direct marketing, publicity, packaging, merchandising, and corporate communication. Shown are created from left Cecile A. Sanchez, chair and CEO, Leverage International; Cherry Villanueva Jr. MCV Marketing and Consultancy; and Jo Cuales, Advertising Association Trade Center Metro Manila, Philippines, assisting from left Edgar Cecilia, Sales Inhancer Cruz and Fernandez, Mangaoang, at MCV Marketing and Consultancy.

SARAH GERONIMO RENEWS CONTRACT WITH AMACU



ABM Consumer University, Asia's pioneer and largest consumer education provider, recently renewed its contract with Sarah Geronimo as the university's exclusive endorser at the ABM Corporate Office in Ortigas City. Geronimo started promoting the university last year and Amacu strongly believes that she is still the perfect epitome of the youth, putting value in education despite her busy schedules as a recording artist, stage and actress. Photo shown: Amie Amoles II, Agustus Amoles II, Agustus III, dean and president of ABM Group of Companies Hope Bank, Sarah Geronimo and Vic del Rosario, dean and CEO of Vic Communications Inc.

Bits & Clips

Ministop's Ice Cream Festival

NOTHING BEATS THE SUMMER HEAT QUITE LIKE YOUR favorite ice cream. You can feel the season even more by dropping by your favorite Ministop store for a half gallon of your favorite ice cream brand. Ministop has celebrities for Dream Festival 2008, and as part of the cool realities, the fastest-growing convenience store chain is offering a special treat. Every purchase of a half-gallon of Nestle, Magnolia or Selecta items (1.5L, 1.6L, 1.7L and 1.8L) entitles ice cream lovers to 2 slices of free ice Dream Bonus. Each box contains 18 slices of ice cream, your family or friends can savor this sweet, cool dessert together. Beat the summer heat and enjoy this year's ice Dream Festival. Visit the nearest Ministop soon and enjoy one of the scrumptious summer's coolest ice cream treats, because this promo period is from March 31 to May 05 only!

Ask the experts

SO MANY LOCKER PROFESSIONAL'S ACADEMY OF SKILLS and Technology is offering aspiring businessmen learn the valuable secrets to having a successful, rewarding and lasting career in entrepreneurship. As per with the best hairdressing schools from the world, ASK Studio is offering seminars in cutting, coloring, forming and styling hair for hairdressers and salon operators, helping them upgrade their skills. Following an integrated global system, ASK, which is located at 01-B Peterson's Corporate Plaza 7, Ortigas Jr. Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City, has partnered with Toni & Guy Headquarters in London, Tokyo and Germany. ASK Studio is putting discounts, each of all the courses and get 50 percent discount, all salon courses and you'll get 20 percent discount, early bookings or book 1 course and get 10 percent discount. For inquiries, call 928-0401, 706-0298 or 706-2811 or fax 706-2810 or e-mail toptylelab@hotmail or toptylelab@pacific.com.ph. You may also call the Technical hotline at 706-2812.

Sun Cellular's Call and Text Combo 20

TAKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL REUNION OF YOU TO HE under the Sun. A new, unbeatable offer is yours for the taking – Sun Cellular's Call and Text Combo 20! Loaded via the Kamus Load, it allows you to enjoy longer talk time and more text messages. This new prepaid product gives you 20 minutes of Sun-to-Sun calls, 80 Sun-to-Sun texts and 20 texts to other networks for only P50. Sun Cellular is truly the leader in giving subscribers products that fit their budget. Among the bestseller offers are the Call and Text Unlimited P70, that gives you unlimited calls, good for 1 day, the P150 Call and Text Combo which gives you 40 minutes of Sun-to-Sun calls, 40 Sun to Sun text messages and 10 inter-network texts, and budget 87. It has given you 15 texts to other networks. So take advantage of this pocket-friendly offer. Load up via the thousands of Kamus Load retailers nationwide. Keep to the Sun Shop nearest you for more details or call the Sun Hotline 886-8000. For online inquiries, you may log on to www.suncellular.com.ph.

MRC's 'Bring Home a Selecta'

METRO GAISANO'S METRO HOMARCS CLUB (MRC) is bringing you a cool way to enjoy a refreshing summer experience. A chilling and mouthwatering treat is in store for all Metro Rewards Club premium cardholders with Metro's "Bring Home a Selecta." Metro Rewards Club premium cardholders can redeem a half gallon of Selecta ice cream with their MRC 300 points. Five cute choices from any of Selecta's Classico ice cream flavors: Mango, Ube and Chocolate. Promo starts on April 25, Hurry! Grab this limited summer offer. Visit any MRC redemption booths in Metro Colon, Supermarket Manchow, Metro Rizals, Metro Lucena, Metro Legaspi, and Metro Market! Marked for details.

Ducks Unlimited's elite membership card

DEEP IN THE CHANNELINGS MINGLING THROUGH DUCKS Unlimited has remained faithful to its vision of providing the market with an affordable alternative to the expensive high-end products offered by foreign brands. A week ago, it launches its elite membership card. Accumulate P10,000 within 6 months and get 20 percent lifetime discount on all regular picture items. Limited or cardholders only. Ducks Unlimited is able to ensure that product items are of the highest quality through stringent standards set upon the manufacturer. Ducks Unlimited shops are located in Shopwise Alabang Hills, SM Pampanga, SM San Lazaro, Festival Mall, Robinson's Galleria, Robinson's Ermita, Robinson's Pioneer, Dudes's Buendia, Landmark Trinoma, Landmark Makati, Century Park Sheraton Hotel, Crossing Bag'I Store, Glorietta 3, SM Centerpoint, SM Manila, Ayala Cebu.

IMSURAN LIFE'S 5TH TEXT PROMO GRAND PRIZE WINNER AWARDED

Gerlie Lee, owner of Gerlie Boutique, Pier 1 Mall, Dasmariñas, Cavite receives her Php 1.5 million prize from Imsuran Life's Executive Vice President Jaypee Ong during the grand prize drawing of the 5th Text Promo. Lee, a mother of two, simply text IMSU GERLIE, Policy Number and Name Birth Date/Home Phone & Email to 2323 for a chance to win the grand prize. Imsuran Life's 5th Text Promo ran from March 1 to April 30, 2008 and received over 1,000 entries. Shown in photo are Gerlie Lee (fifth from left) being awarded her prize by Imsuran Life's Executive Vice President Jaypee Ong, Imsuran Life's Regional Sales Director Rhodora Ann Ramos, Imsuran Life's Regional Sales Manager Jeffrey Ramos, Imsuran Life's Regional Sales Director Ma. Cristina Ramos, Imsuran Life's Regional Sales Director Ma. Cristina Ramos, Imsuran Life's Regional Sales Director Ma. Cristina

BUSINESS

RP seeking $300M in soft loan from ADB

Amount earmarked for judicial system

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES IS SEEKING A new $300-million official development assistance package from multilateral lender Asian Development Bank to strengthen the country's judicial system.

Finance Undersecretary and acting National Treasurer Roberto Tan said the ADB package was now being worked out and would be part of the ODA loans in the pipeline for this year.

"We want to include this loan in our ODA (official development assistance) for this year," Tan said.

Earlier, the ADB urged the Philippines to commit more to the judicial system as the rule of law, like health and education, was a public good that would yield long-term gains to society.

The ADB believes that strengthening legal and judicial institutions make good economic sense as studies have found that strong institutions were important to economic growth and social development.

The Justice system is also seen as key in regard to safeguarding society against corrupt acts such as bribery rulings that, in turn, diminish predictability that attract businesses to plan ahead and partake markets to work effectively.

ADB general counsel Arthur Mitchell, in a recent judicial reform forum, said the Philippines, like the rest of Asia, was spending very little to reform the judicial system.

"Our might ask, if law is so important, why do of politicians pay more attention to it? I think the answer is that investment in legal systems and reform is based on a shortsighted view of law's benefit to society," Mitchell said.

"In a society that narrowly views a law's purpose as conflict resolution, there is a tendency to think that only those individuals and groups that are in conflict benefit from improvements in the legal system," he added.

Therefore, he said the last vast of allowing society as a whole to function by creating and implementing legal frameworks that leads to greater predictability.

He said policymakers should not take the view that justice could wait.

IT firms tapping new markets overseas

By Rosemil W. Gonzaga

LOCAL INFORMATION TECHNOLogy companies are diversifying their markets to include Japan amid an expected economic slowdown in the United States, their main source of revenues.

According to the Department of Trade and Industry, the Japanese IT services market—the second largest worldwide—is projected to reach 2.5 trillion yen (some $30 billion) in revenues this year and 3.3 trillion yen (about $50 billion) by 2010.

In view of this, the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions is leading eight firms in joining the 17th Software Development Expo and Conference to be held in Tokyo, May 14-16.

These firms include Advanced World Systems, Alliance Software, Aurex (Philippines), Ayala Systems Technology, Impulsora Technology, NOWA Cebu, Tradenet Software Philippine Group, and Wellsoft Systems International.

Participation in Sodec is aimed at introducing local IT companies to the Japanese market.

According to Chew, some Japanese firms were already outsourcing Philippine IT companies for critical IT solutions like ATM (automated teller machine) system management and other banking and finance functions. Those include Fujitsu, Canon, Epson, Interface, System Build and NEC Telecom.

Citing industry statistics, the agency said there were 4,000 Philippine software engineers catering to the Japanese market.

Oscar R. Sobel, chief executive of the Business Process Association of the Philippines, said member firms of his group were trying to diversify their client base amid concerns that a US economic slowdown would dampen demand.

Sobel said BPAP had been sending missions overseas to promote the Philippines particularly in Europe, United Kingdom, Germany and, possibly, France.

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LIFESTYLE
Edna Thelma Sioson San Juan

THURSDAY FOOD FRIDA

PAVLOVA A Meringue with stewed cream, Baguio strawberries and Cerma di Balsamico. This classic fluffy cake is traditionally stacked with whipped cream and fresh fruits of sweet and tarty flavors such as berries, contrasting with the sweetness of the sugar. Italians rub their strawberries with balsamic. It is garnished with a crepe rolled/gilt lemon of red and green grapes, Valhrona chocolate bra.

MARGARITA FORÉS

Still fired-up after battle with Big C

From a best-dressed restaurateur, she's now an industry leader who's learned a lot about life and the threat of death

Sonia Margo C. Enriquez
Contributor
Photos by Rudy Espero

IT'S BEEN 21 SUMMERS SINCE we first interviewed culinary artist Margarita Arauzo Forés in her debut at the Hyatt. The palpable difference between then and now is that she's much richer.

"(Back) in memories, experiences, wonderful employees and successful dishes," she hastened to say in modesty.

Some candid moments, the restaurateur talks about book sales. She has evolved from a timid pedigreed and best dressed caterer to an industry leader.

Two years after her publicized battle with thyroid cancer, Forés' childlike candor and signature smile don't be wiped off her demeanor. After all, she's a star in the pink of health; she launched another hotel design business, Fleur de M, her restaurant Pepato makes it to its fifth year despite the fierce competition at Greenbelt, and she received a recent accolade as Women Entrepreneur of 2007 from the Ernst & Young Entrepreneurs of the Year Philippines (EOYP) as president and CEO of Oho Inc. She also got the Margarita Award from Dolce.

On top of that, she looks younger than 49.

Talk about cancer therapy, flowers, travel, style and family life, and Forés will all seem sweet to her passion—the food business which encompasses everything.

In 2006, she was diagnosed with thyroid cancer and underwent surgery here and at Stanford in California. She underwent radioactive iodine treatment and periods of low-iodine diet. Head-banding came from her still in her teens. The ailment was just a wake-up call of letting go of attachments and certain attitudes towards work that had confined their purpose.

Full throttle

As head of her main businesses, Sonsuno Inc., the mother company of Pepato, Fleur de M, Sonsuno Health Line for the flowers, Cibo di M at the catering, and the award-winning Oho Inc., she manages 600 employees.

Like most achievers, she was always working in full throttle at unanswered speed and wanted to be on top of everything—and still look chic—until they wrought havoc on her health.

"I was always on the go," she recalls. "It taught me not to hurt myself out."

The illness turned out to be a blessing in disguise. When Forés slowed down, hampered her attitudes and learned to delegate, business grew stronger and inroads from the industry followed.

"Since then, I have learned not to take things for granted," she says. One of them was to fully appreciate and trust the competence of her employees.

When she stopped looking over their shoulders, they developed their own work rhythm and became more productive.

Another thing she had failed to do was to literally stop and smell the flowers. See story has it been relaxing for her, but Forés has created beautiful arrangements from recycling discarded golden shower pods or hanging plants on the roadside. The simple "relaxation exercise" has now become a viable business.

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FETTUCCINE WITH VEAL
Fettuccine al Bolognese and veal-beef ragu. This traditional dish is cooked in carabao butter topped with delicate slices of veal.

Still fired-up after battle with Big C

TABLE DISPLAY
Get an eyeful from the arrangement of Segada organ hydroponics tomatoes, Italian cherry tomatoes, Kenny leaks, red bell peppers, cauliflower and broccoli slices and adorned with leaves from the jatropha tree.

From page C1

Raw talents

Earlier, SDA the accounting firm and organizer of the first-ever ENOE (short Feria to submit a financial statement of Cibo Inc. It was a criterion in the selection of the finalists, aside from the company's service to the community.

Feria is proud that she has given work to the underprivileged. Many in her kitchen staff had formal culinary training, like her pasta chef was a waiter, leaving adobo to his employer's home in Quezon. Her Bonita started out as Margarita's mother's help.

"If you get them raw, you can train them the way you want," she says. The employees are given a well-rounded guidance. Feria explains the creative process behind every dish, its concept, even its social context. The staff is thus empowered to educate the customers on the food.

Feria has also learned not to dwell on problems but to provide solutions. For instance, if there is an employee who is quite problematic in one department, she learns not to confront him on the potential. She then moves the person to another work area.

"Instead of putting a square peg in a round hole, find the square hole for the square peg," she says.

She now tries to balance femininity and rigidity and be flexible.

"When you focus on the good, everything just falls into place," says Feria.

PASTA WITH STRIPED BACKGROUND
Gargarelli, made from delicately sliced quill pasta, is topped with rutabaga, the largest rounds from the rear leg of the pig.

'Slurp quality'

In fact, that has been Peyote's reputation—everything is in order, from hand presentation to administration.

At the entrance, Feria creates a rustic ambiance in a modern setting with a display of gear big enough from Angola, tinned bulbs, Italian cherry tomatoes, bar signature hydroponics tomatoes, green red bell peppers, cauliflowers and broccoli.

In April 2003, Peyote started its [illegible] local vinegar is used. Pitchers with English cheese cream or strawberries give an Italian feel with balsamic vinegar in accordance to the tastes of the Brits.

The restaurant has set trends such as popularizing diets and introducing dishes that have been widely duplicated.

Peyote made the South Beach diet (which focuses on good fat and carbohydrates) with its vegan and remaining diet so healthy but highly-regarded more accessible by applying cheese daily with a variety of meals.

"We have super high-fat meat like bone marrow, saved from daily preparation on chicken and foie gras on many occasions," says Feria.

Today, one can request Peyote's version of the low-calorie diet for patients with thyroid conditions or the Zone Diet which is high in protein, moderate in carbohydrates and low in fat or to calorie weight loss.

Once served is only the one to order, Peyote's newest launch—discouraging, bite-sized morsels served at the end that showcases the chef's artistry—has found its way many private dinners and functions. Feria's chefs have become more creative concocting the course.

"After more than 20 years there's still so much to learn or do. I'd like to learn my courage on making a life and making living more beautiful for others," says Feria.

'Sous-vide'

FOIL COOKING
Chilean sea bass. Using the vacuum cooking method, the fish is placed in an air-tight carton box or plastic cooking foil, placed in the oven and cooked slowly. The food can be cooked in its own juices with other liquids such as wines and yet maintaining its original appearance.

Spaghettini Carbonara deconstructed

SPAGHETTINI WITH GUANciale, Grated Cheese, Eggs, and Pepper: This is Peyote's version of a Roman favorite.

Makes 4 full portions

Ingredients

3–4 tbsp olive oil (If the bacon is very fatty, use less oil)

100 g guanciale (pig cheek bacon) or pancetta, cubed

1–2 cloves garlic, slightly bruised

300 g spaghettini, preferably de cecco

4 pc egg yolks, preferably organic pamalgiano reggiano, pecorino romano, or both, freshly grated, to taste

black pepper, freshly-ground, to taste

Italian parsley, chopped or torn, for garnish

Procedure

1. Boil pasta in a pot of vigorously boiling, salted water.

2. In another heavy saucepan, warm the olive oil over medium. Panfry cooking until the oil does not smoke.

3. Add the cubed guanciale or pancetta and garlic and cook until the bacon is nearly crisp and the garlic nearly golden.

4. Remove the garlic, then remove pan from flame and set aside.

5. Prepare four bowls, and gently lay an egg yolk on each one.

6. When pasta is al dente, drain, leaving a bit of pasta water to deglaze, and add immediately to the bacon.

7. Toss quickly over a medium flame, and transfer immediately to the four bowls, dividing equally. Garnish with parsley and serve immediately.

8. Add freshly ground black pepper and some parmigiano-reggiano or pecorino romano, or a bit of both, toss briskly to blend, and enjoy!

This is a novel way of preparing carbonara that I learned from one of my most favorite restaurants in Milan. It is a new way to prevent making scrambled eggs out of your carbonara unless you add the eggs. (A common line for many who try) since the egg yolk is tossed almost as soon as you eat it. The unpleasant course mostly from

SPAGHETTINI with Guanciale, Grated Cheese, Eggs, and Pepper

It's all about timing

your guests enjoying the courses of actually putting the final touch on his or her own dish. And the best part is that you enjoy it on the table. Just a few swirls of the wrist, without the cream, the way real Romans do... and the sharp doesn't even need to come from adding the homemaking cream!

Making good carbonara, as any pasta dish for that matter, is all about timing. Not only the way pasta melts for no one... to enjoy it at its best, pasta must be eaten immediately after it is prepared.

Sharing this recipe with you is Peyote's way of saying thank you for five wonderful years of allowing us to make your food... [illegible]

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PDI LIFESTYLE KITCHEN-TESTED RECIPE

Chocolate candy cookies

By Norma Chikiamco
Contributor

THESE COOKIES COME with a warning. They're highly addictive. Share them with friends and family. They're excellent as dessert, with ice cream or with coffee.

Bite-Size Chocolate Candy Cookies

Makes about 200 mini cookies (or about 120 regular-size cookies)

2 c all-purpose flour
1 c unsweetened cocoa powder
1 tsp baking soda
½ tsp salt
1 1/3 c butter, softened
1 c + 3 tbsp sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp vanilla
4 packs (38.6 g each) Mini M&M chocolate candies

Cook's tips

- Soften the butter slightly before using (in its case) to measure and to beat. Generally, one block of butter makes one cup. To measure the 1/3 cup butter, start with one stick (about 100 grams) of butter and slice off about one inch from one end. Spoon the remaining butter into 1/3 measuring cup. Add more butter if necessary to fill the 1/3 cup.
- Chill the butter in the refrigerator for at least 20 minutes before scooping with cookie cutters. Otherwise, the butter will be too soft and difficult to work with.
- Do not overbeat the butter, or the cookies will become tough. Once you've added the flour mixture, beat only until the flour mixture is combined with the butter mixture.
- Store the cookies in an airtight container to keep them extra crisp.
- If you can't find mini M&M's, just use the regular ones.

Sift together flour, cocoa powder, baking soda and salt in a large mixing bowl. Stir with a large spoon to combine. Set aside.

Cream butter and sugar in a bowl of electric mixer until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs and vanilla.

Gradually add the flour mixture and beat just until combined. Cover bowl and let batter rest in refrigerator for about 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350°F (or 175°C). Scoop out the batter by rounded teaspoonfuls (or by ball-teaspoonfuls) and drop about one inch apart onto ungreased cookie sheet.

Press two to three mini M&M's on top of each cookie. Bake for 9-9 minutes or until just set. Cool slightly. (See transfer cookies to a wire rack to cool completely.

FOR SET: classic clear acrylic, 31-piece rectangular box, colorful breadsticks, made from purple yam, rapidicini and lentil; shaker (in white) contains a mixture of grated parmesan cheese, rock salt and pepper, garnished with rosemary sprig

Tips on setting a table

1 WHETHER YOU ARE setting a table for everyday meal at home or for a special occasion, visualize a clear theme, with a feel, mood and color scheme, so that all the elements are tastefully put together.

2 Be creative when arranging your centerpiece and serving. Be resourceful and think out of the box. Use interesting stuff from your personal collection or unique foliage or blooms from your garden that hold up well. What is tasteful and effective need not be expensive or contrived. Go for an element of surprise and your strong personal touch.

3 Don't be afraid to mix patterns and styles to create more interesting and memorable settings.

4 Themselves to consider the elements of the season where you are set. Bring the table on that it blends well with its environment.

5 Make sure your centerpiece is low enough to allow for easy and relaxed conversation.

6 Remember that your guests and what you serve are the stars of the evening. Your serving is just the enhancement, and your guests' enjoyment and comfort are the priority. The quality of the food and drink should also be the highlights, while the setting is the stage you set to make them shine.

7 Remember that ample elbow room requires about 15 inches of space between place settings. If dishes are to be served in platters using "Russian service" such the dishes served to your guests on platters at the table, add even more space between guests, especially if your chairs are bulky.

8 Use the existing rule of thumb when laying out your tableware. But don't be afraid to break rules where practicality and function are considered. Most modern aesthetic styles also allow for new and nontraditional ways of arranging tableware. Ultimately, be correct but also be bold enough to be different.

9 Enjoy your setting and relax as your guests enjoy it, too!

TROPICAL CENTERPIECE
Centerpiece can be made from plants in the backyard. Golden shower pods that fall from trees are wrapped in dry vines and adorned with miniature plants sold on the roadside.

Big strides from small rice cakes

WHEN I SAW THE AFTERnoon rinse on the side table, it made me smile. My first thought was, "At last, they're learning."

The rinse was cassava cake, two small pieces topped with shredded coconut. Next day it was kutsinta and the day after, tuvon. It was in a bunny room at Discovery Shores in Boracay. What was even better was that each treat had a short explanation of what it is, what it's made of. While you sense that this is mainly for the foreigners staying at the hotel, it gives Filipinos the chance to appreciate their own specialties.

My own appreciation was boosted that there is an effort to augment our rice-and-ulam meal. I had wished for that kind of food promotion years back during my first visit to Bangkok where I enjoyed it probably the best hotel there, The Oriental.

That rice cakes were brought every afternoon to the room's personal butler. They had a short write-up as well and served these with either tea or coffee.

But what I was most impressed about was our dessert table, a small one tucked with some pieces of our kind of fruits. Accompanying it was a beautiful card with an artist's rendition of the fruit. This was my introduction to a green version of marang.

The other information about what it was was placed at the back of the card. It said: "Rose apple or water apple (Eugenia dunguna) is grown as a broad evergreen shade tree native to Southeast Asia. The taste differs according to variety and it is often eaten in Thailand with a salt, sugar and chili dip. This fruit is harvested through the year in Providence."

In that short paragraph, it had the fruit name, the origin, the name, the look of the tree, how it is eaten by the Thais and where it is grown in Thailand. With that card, you had a beautiful souvenir, an art piece, a snapshot of the food culture.

COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Fonacier

Chico and green grapes

The next two days, I had a different fruit, our local chico (sapodilla) grown in Romblon) and harvested several times a year and, surprisingly, green grapes that is grown in the temperate northern region of Bajhoc.

Those are absolutely butter when receiving a big fruit basket without any information. And usually many of those fruits in the basket aren't even grown in the country like apples and oranges (the Gardens kind). If there are mangoes, nothing is said about how a prince is one, and many foreigners don't know how. Bananas are usually the Cavendish type, not the best varieties of bananas or the sweetest or the creamiest that we grow.

Those small rice cakes at Discovery Shores are big steps toward promoting our own cuisine. There were bigger attempts before. Makati Shangri-La had Dusit's years back, no Filipino food outlet, and then an even more short-lived Filipino tea time where rice cakes were cooked based on recipes volunteered by its own employees.

How sad that to see our country, our hosts don't even showcase our cooking.

And in Boracay, there's no place that serves Filipino food the way Spanish, Indian and Japanese are served there. It's always the taro-cafe, Mindoro hotel in the mall events.

One ray of hope is that there are restaurants that can show hotels how. The Inn Lorry Cruz's restaurants, Abe and Rizon Remedios, serve Filipino cooking reminding the Filipinos less giving a more upscale presentation. In the provinces, there are restaurants that no longer operate like a cut-inderio but more like a cafe.

We all experience culinary trends through travel or through cable TV. Many cooks are trained in the art of cooking that include hygienic preparations and storage of food and aesthetic presentations. All these can be used to promote Filipino food to the right way.

E-mail the author at priyo.food04@yahoo.com

CHEFS COOK FOR THEIR SIGNIFICANT OTHER (Dumi is a writer)

Tenderloin, prawns, risotto— the charm is on

FREDERICK Custodio

Text by Margie Baga-Reyes
Photos by August delaCruz

Chef Frederick Custodio gives the meat-seafood dish a new twist

FREDERICK CUSTODIO, CHEF de partie of Cravings Fusion Place, knows how to use his culinary talents to impress his girl.

He'd whip up something elaborate and gourmet-ish, like this Surf and Turf. It combines meat and seafood, usually lobster tail and beef fillet.

However, Custodio's take on this meat- and seafood entrée uses grilled beef tenderloin paired with seared scallops and sautéed prawns on a bed of creamy risotto and tossed greens with balsamic vinaigrette.

"It has to be sophisticated and scrumptious," Custodio insists. "Knowing that I took for a living, they expect me to do something incredibly different. Things I've learned in school. Stuff they cannot do. They appreciate that."

Custodio, 33, finds wine the kind of dishes he'd prepare for his significant others. He prefers seafood because it's more versatile and easy to prepare. If he found only fish in the market, he'd simply poach it to retain its moisture, add a cream of prawn sauce, and serve it with fried prawns on the side.

With Surf and Turf, his girl can relish meat and seafood. The risotto completes the package.

"It's so easy to do. It only takes a few minutes to cook the beef and scallops. It's the risotto that takes quite a while. You have to stir the rice consistently for half an hour but the nice thing about it is that your persistence will show how special your girl is. It's a special preparation for your special someone," says Custodio, a Culinary Arts graduate of the Center for Culinary Arts in Balintawak, Quezon City.

Ideally, Surf and Turf is served for lunch because it's quite heavy and filling. A glass of red wine is better than iced tea.

SURF and Turf

For Custodio, it's even better to have meals as catered occasions.

"I've done that: dinner for two in my house. While cooking in the kitchen, the music was a bit upbeat. While already enjoying the food the music slowed down and lights were dimmed," he recalls.

Custodio normally fixes up a complete meal: from soup and salad to dessert.

A typical dinner would be pansit canton. To give it a Pinoy twist, Custodio concocts pancitlus pansit canton in avocado pansit canton.

Surf and Turf

(Beef Tenderloin, Prawns and Scallops with Risotto Milanese and Tossed Greens)

Ingredients
¼ c olive oil
120-130 g beef tenderloin
3 pc tiger prawns, peeled
3 pc scallops, large
2 c lettuce (mesclun or frisee)
4 pc cherry tomatoes cut in half
1 c risotto rice
2 c chicken stock
180 g butter
5 tbsp pesto sauce
½ tsp saffron
½ tsp white sesame seeds, toasted
3 pc shallots, chopped
½ c white wine
4 tbsp balsamic vinegar
¼ tsp salt
¼ tsp ground black pepper
1 tbsp parsley, chopped
2 tbsp Parmesan cheese
½ pc lemon cut in wedges

Heat oil in a saucepan and sauté shallots and risotto rice, then pour wine. Add simmered risotto rice and continue to toast with oil. Add saffron. Slowly add stock once rice, approximately 5 tbsp every time while stirring with a wooden spoon.

Add more stock when risotto starts to dry up. Cook until risotto is al dente. Add parmesan to the last minute. Stir sticky.

Season beef with salt and pepper and sear for 3 minutes each side in a hot pan with oil to desired doneness. Set aside to rest for a few minutes before serving. Put all in a sauté pan over medium heat. Cook prawns until just done. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.

In the same pan, sear both scallops until light brown color. Enter around the edges and season with salt and pepper to taste.

To assemble, scoop risotto into a plate. Place beef and seafood on the side. Toss greens in oil and balsamic vinegar mixture and season with salt and pepper. Carefully arrange on plate. Garnish with toasted butter and sesame seeds and drizzle with pesto sauce.

LEILA Tan-Gan, Angela Trillo, Claudine Trillo-Welsh and Bobby Yao

GEMMA Cabrera and José Luis Gomez

ANGELES, Agnes and Tito Wines

Incredible organic wines

JOSÉ LUIS GOMEZ, A YOUNG EMBRESTIC Spanish guru and partner of Bodegas Anapide, flew in for the launch of his organic wines in the Peninsula Manila. The beautiful crowd was a mix of Y and Y generations and baby boomers from hotels, restaurants, supermarkets, corporate world, and social wine aficionados. This Trills, his partner in Manila, made sure that the delicious tapas and organic wines were endlessly poured for the connoisseurs of Gomez Estrada—all red and wines from Spain.

The origin of Bodegas Anapide was founded nine years ago by three friends, a Greek courier, a wine maker and a grower. Today, there are 40 shareholders.

Anapide is now a leader on brand-name awareness in Spain and is also spreading the internationalized numbers with a lot of applause. They have garnered around 50 awards from bronze to gold in the international wine scene.

The product speaks for itself. From the heart of Spain—Valdepeñas—the valley of the stones, starts the vision of achieving organically grown grapes from about 25- to 60-year-old vines, which was no chemical fertilizers. They stick to bio-harvest farming, harvesting in 15-kilo cases which keep the grapes fresh and whole. Then the grapes are refrigerated, sorted out before they are fermented. The grapes are actually crushed delicately before fermentation starts. All wines are aged in French oak barrels—for an average of six months for the New World Style wines like Agnes Crianza at 12 months like Tito Gran Reserva Classic. Then wines are further matured in the bottle for another

MARCELA Arellano, Oliver Allen and Tess Mallorca

FRANCES Lim, Sofia Gallego, Joey Yabut, Wilson Fong

12 months in refrigerated cases.

The surprise was the tasting of Natalia Sweet Red, which is only 6 percent alcohol made out of 100 percent Shiraz, and Natalia Sweet White, which is also 6 percent alcohol and made out of 100 percent Chardonnay.

These wines are great for aperitifs and desserts.

The crowd was impressed by the organic wines like Andrés Arcil applauded José Luis Gomez for introducing the total Greco-Gomez bio-harvest-farming...all natural. Certified by the Agricultura Ecologica of Spain.

LIFESTYLE

Two roasted goat recipes

Chefs George Lizares and Cyrille Soenen rise to the challenge

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aghimien

CHEFS Lizares and Soenen (right)

AFTER THE COLUMN I DID on whole spit-roasted goat, many recipe requests came my way. Among the letter readers, Fabel and Sandee bringed were the biggest goat meat lovers.

Since I've never had spit-roasted goat in my life, I asked two of my colleagues to whip up recipes for this column.

One of them is George Lizares, the most credible Filipino chef in Middle Eastern, South African, Egyptian and Moroccan cuisines. Lizares worked in the Royal Palace in Oman for 18 years.

Roasted goat is an stranger to the French as well. So I also asked Corsican Hans and Holiday Inn Galleria Executive Chef Cyrille Soenen to share his Hors Cool Roasted Goat Peppered recipe with us.

For the Ang Cafe fans, which make for excellent kambing inchos, call 8259886. For Sofiang cabrito, call Robert Aquino at (0906-8400322).

Lizares' Spit-Roasted Cabrito (Kid Goat)

"There are many ways to marinate goat for spit-roasting. One trick is not to make it sweet since, considering the long cooking time, your pulsed goat will look burned within the first hour. Begin with cut inside.

"You should be cooking it like we do in Oman—the horizontal method, or the vertical spit roast, like the way chawarma is cooked where the flame is placed on the side of the meat. If you don't have a spit roast, you can opt to roast it in the oven.

"This actually is best for lamb but can work well with goats also. Whichever you decide to use, they should be well cleaned of all innards. If freshly slaughtered, keep it refrigerated for at least a day to improve the meat quality."

Marinade: whole goat of about 5 kg to 7 ½ (please adjust to your liking)

A handful of fresh, or about 2 tbsp dried rosemary leaves

1-2 tsp black pepper

2-3 tbsp cumin powder

Salt to taste

Massage mixture well on goat, inside the cavity as well as out. Marinate in refrigerator for 6-8 hours.

Skewer with steel pole from the rear end and run the pole all the way to the throat cutting through the mouth. Secure both the feet and the arms and then tie with a metal wire (add swears. It should look like the way you have "ride" when it's up for sale.

Have the stove burning charcoal ready to cook the goat, which can take anywhere between 3-5 hours, depending on the size of the animal and the quality of your embers. You may adjust the coal to be more intense on the thick, meaty parts.

Keep turning the pole consistently. This is not an easy job, so you should consider getting hired help to keep the goat evenly done. Even better, just use a modern cooker electric rotisserie, which is essentially a bigger version of those lower-manual grills.

Be sure that the spit roast height can be adjusted. In the beginning, the goat, again depending on its size and weight, is about 24 inches above the embers. As it progresses, you may want to adjust it lower or higher again. This demands full attention and skill.

When done, remove from the skewer and serve on a bed of saffron rice flavored with sautéed chicken livers, stewed tomatoes, and plenty of roasted pine nuts. Decorate with fresh mint leaves.

You could use the same marinade for the goat and tie both the arms and the legs together and bake in an oven. Cooking time depends on the goat's size and weight. Bake this in a heavy-duty roasting or baking pan, with about two cups of water to keep it moist. Or a deep cup, add more water.

Towards the middle of the cooking period, lower the temperature and cover the roast with aluminum foil to keep it from burning, as the water will keep it moist. When broiler, remove the aluminum foil and roast, basting frequently with the cooking juices, until you achieve a nice and golden color.

This is for easier than spit roasting, isn't it?

TWO 10

DAILY CROSSWORD

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47 Jumbled jewelry shipment
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47 Toward the storm
50 Hotel room
51 Indian drum
52 Extraordinary brilliance
53 Cabinet

By Mark F. Sherkenbach
Huntington Beach, CA

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

For more info: Francis Drake's Horoscope and Astrology Guide, 2nd Ed. by Kris Brandenburg, Llewellyn Publishing, 2007.

ARIES (March 21 to April 20): This is a wonderful day for you to make long-range plans, especially about earning money. And if you've been thinking about getting married, you will find a long-time.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 21): You may have a long-range plan or a lot of things in your head right now. You're giving thought to your future, and especially your relationship with others. What's on your mind, Jake?

GEMINI (May 21 to June 21): You might have a secret affair or a relationship that you're thinking about with someone other than your primary partner. Maybe it's time to tell your partner about it.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Talk to someone who is older or wiser or more experienced than you today. This person definitely has what you're looking for and is willing and qualified to help you.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 23): Your authority figure is especially passionate and 100% on your side today. People can find you by taking a long-range view. Don't get caught up in the day-to-day nitpicking. Keep long-term goals in mind, because you're dealing with the distant future.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 23): There is a good day to make plans about relationships, publishing, politics, the media, medicine and the law. You're talking a long-range, practical and ethical line.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 23): Your intellectual curiosity is at its peak today. You'll enjoy discussing the latest in political and philosophical thought. Your mind is working overtime, and you're ready to learn something new.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 22): Serious discussions with significant others are on your agenda today. You're looking at some long-term goals and how others fit in with yours.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Someone older and more experienced might have good advice for you on work today. Whatever you do, this person probably has an opinion on it and is willing to help.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 21 to Jan. 19): Romance and communication collide today. Perhaps someone you date not only appreciates your mind but is experienced with your profession and can provide valuable insight on how to solve problems.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Make sure you're paying attention to your partner today. You'll enjoy discussing the latest in political and philosophical thought. Your mind is working overtime, and you're ready to learn something new.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You might play the role of counselor to someone today or perhaps you might need a mentor who is older and wiser who does this. No matter who, someone's advice is getting passed around.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

		5						3
			2		1			
1				8	7	9		
	1					7	2	
		3		2		4		
	6	7					3	
		2	1	4				5
			6		3			
7						6		

Difficulty Level ★★★

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

9	5	7	3	4	2	1	8	6
3	8	1	6	5	9	4	2	7
2	4	6	7	8	1	3	9	5
8	1	9	2	6	5	7	4	3
7	2	5	4	1	3	9	6	8
6	3	4	8	9	7	5	1	2
5	6	8	1	7	4	2	3	9
4	9	2	5	3	6	8	7	1
1	7	3	9	2	8	6	5	4

Difficulty Level ★★★

GOINGS ON

Food caterers host 3rd Taste of Manila

THE FOOD CATERERS ASSOCIATION OF the Philippines will hold the 3rd Taste of Manila 2007, June 11-13 at the Tomas de Fromers Verde in Pasay City. Members will showcase their best menu, preparation, food styling, table setting, ambience concepts, floral designs, culinaria, drapes, silverware, glassware's linens and sheets. The exhibit will be live shots sponsored by Chef Secchi's Chefs Joseph Ace Severo. Admission is free. This year's event will focus on Filipiniana settings and will feature the delicacies and dishes of various provinces such as Ilocos, Pampanga, Bulacan, Tinal, Batangas, Laguna, Cavite, Bicol region, Bacolod, Cebu, Bacolod, Iloilo, Davao and Zamboanga. The event's activities are as follows: an exhibit of table settings of various Filipino regional settings with a modern touch; a display of floral arrangements for various celebrations and motifs; a showcase of new equipment and trends in catering and food services and food products; a bridal fashion show; and cooking demonstrations of caterers' specialties. Call Paolo Martin Salvador, ICAP coordinator at 4165594, telefax 2818838, mobile 0917-8273868.

Reggie Aspiras' cooking class sked

May 2—Can't Live Without Coconut Milk Chicken Pinoy/an—all one!—To Die for Sweet Chili Grilled Chicken, Whole Roasted Peanut Chicken With Prawn in Peanut Sauce, Best Ever Green Chicken Curry With Condiments, Red Iron Chicken Satay With Mini Serving, Red Chicken Curry w/ Quezon Rice

May 3—Competent Salad & Appetizer Bill 'till Special Date—all one!—Millionaire's Salad of Prawn, Foie Gras and Duck Confit, Mushroom Carpaccio, Grilled Prawn Salad On Honey Arugula, Turkey and Roasted Cashew Salad, Smoked Salmon with Fruit Jelly On Greens, Rice Bran Toast with Fruit and Prawn Jelly, Mixed Salad, Mixed Fruit Salad, Appetizers of Cheese & Pate—Raclette Station—The Most Lavish Tartare Spread Ever! Tons of Condiments, Pates, Terrines, Pate A Light Chicken Liver Mousse, Condiments Served With Mixed Toasts and Crumbs

May 9—Banquet—Appetizer, Soup, Salad and Main Dishes. Over 12 Easy and Delicious Banquet Recipes. Hong Chicharon, Tomato Salad, Lumpia in Ham Aspic

May 7—Poultry 101—Aromatic Beef Fried Chunk, Pesto Tiro with Kandiyan, Ginger Fried Chicken, Bombay Chicken, Bam-Pow Marinated Fried Pigeon, Tales

Call 8299096 / 9273008 / 9880893

Family bonding at Maya Kitchen

Moms and Dads, make a play date with your child in "Parent and Child Cooking Tandem," April 26 and May 2, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. This course covers cooking and simple garnishing and baking with decorating. Recipes: Cereals Loop, Bacon-Wrapped Apple Burger, No-Bake Macaroni and Cheese, Rolled Molded Animal Cookies, Happy Face Cupcakes, Chocolate Drinking, Frosted Cookies and Pink Panther Cookies. Attendees get a free cookbook. Second batch is on May 28 and 30.

"Young People's Cook- In (YCP) for 13 to 19 y/o old," May 7- 9, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., will take teens on a hands- on culinary journey through variety of fun and exciting dishes. Learn Theories and Practice on Table Setting, Napkin Folding, Hygiene, Sanitation and Safety. One-dish wash Meals, Baking Wonders with Mixes and Cake design,Mix. Recipes are Tater Skins, Quiche sta'rking, Pot Pie, Chocolate Milkshake, Easy Bolognese, Party Food Tart, Tramisu, Pan Cakes, Chocolate Lava Overload. As Duties are Ways With Color Row, Edible Cards Day and Macrame Making.

"Fundamentals of Bakery Production" will be held May 8-9, 2-6 p.m. Topics include standard baking techniques applicable to Muffins, Creative Use of Basic

Filipino recipes, remixed and remastered

What makes the dishes at X/O unique is the twist put on them

Text by Rowena C. Borgo
Photos by Rudel Ruivivar

A COUPLE THAT COOKS AND travels together, stays together. That is the motto that has worked well for Andrew and Sandra Montgomery, owners of a chain of restaurants and the new X/O Extraordinary Philippines.

"X/O is a good way to promote not only Filipino cuisine but everything about the Philippines as well. This first outlet was conceptualized as a retail run; we plan to open more X/Os to make them around the world like Vancouver, New York and London," says Andrew, president of Prime Pacific Corp. He with Sandra is vice-president.

The couple's marriage has lasted 14 years. They have a daughter, Amanda Julia, 9, who often travels with them. She also serves as the chief critic of her parents' food creations.

For the Montgomerys, balancing business, marriage and family is a challenge, but one they are handling well.

"The best part about this business for me is that I'm able to share this with my wife and daughter," says Andrew.

For Sandra, having the same passion for food, travel and photography has brought an energetic joy to their business and a high-spirited playfulness to their relationship. "It adds spice to our marriage," she says.

And even though Andrew is not a diet nazi to pursue his love for running, Sandra's enthusiasm for good food has never waned.

"Any crisp formats, as bold as staple diet," says Andrew, who, on the other hand, is into fried wedding.

TRENDS Cue Chorizo

X/O EXTRAORDINAIRE Philippines at S/L, The Block, GH North Edsa

Recipe remix

The menu served at X/O came from pursed-down recipes of friends and local restaurateurs that the couple had met during their trips around the country. But what makes the dishes at X/O unique is the twist put on them.

"A lot of our dishes are very traditional, but we do what I like to call a recipe remix," Sandra says. "There are so many things to improve on Filipino food.

Lechon Kawali, for instance, is served on a piece of French bread, mainly to absorb the sweet's oil.

SANDRA Montgomery and manager Amanda Julia

The fresh vegetables and slabs of fish/shrimp are served separately from the peanut sauce. Binagoongan Lumpia is presented with slices of green mango to balance the piquancy of bagoong. Chicken Relleno is served in several shortcut versions of papaya. Lechon Tian Paolo is served frozen with mangoes and ice cream.

"I like food that is approachable and appetizing, not something that's too pretty to eat," Sandra says.

Others aren't my regional specialties at X/O are Tinolang Manok, Kinilaw, Kinalas Toyo Tinapa, Ukoy, Kinilaw Tinapa and Aligue Rice.

The seasonals and logistics at X/O were for its recipes come from different regions: joint Asian Kitsch, Garden salsa from Baguio City; strawberry-kiwi from Tagaytay; and chocolate from Batangas; and native delicacies from Bulacan.

Serving local wines such as muscat, dulcet and honey at X/O is more on the daring hand.

"Among the sparkling X/O offers, one personal favorite is the food from Rioja, Spain are so innovative. They work skillfully with the fine ingredients they have at hand. They're just prior to marketing their specialties," Andrew says.

All in the family

Andrew's family has been in the restaurant business for 17 years now.

He, the other hand, Sandra, an architect, learned cooking from her mother, Deedee Santiago, and professional grandmother Julia. A Spanish-descendent, Sandra's grandma is "one of the best cooks I've known," she says. "I remember when I was small, people would line up at our house during the months of September and October for her Empanadas. She also cooks the best adobo. So, as a young girl, instead of playing outside with other kids, I was always in the kitchen licking the leftover batter from bowls."

Now, Sandra cooks daily at home and occasionally experiments on recipes for X/O's menu.

After seven of food fantasmic and innumerable hours at the kitchen and on the road, Andrew and Sandra still find cooking, managing a restaurant and traveling an adventure.

X/O Extraordinary Philippines is at S/L, The Block, GH North Edsa, QC. Call 4413889.

BARE-HARE Crispy Tadyang

Still excellent, despite Michelin downgrade

ROASTY Duck with Dragonfruit

By Ingrid Chua Go
Contributor

ON A RECENT TRIP TO PARIS WITH MY family, it was decided that we would dine in at least one French restaurant that has been awarded the coveted Michelin stars. After all, Paris is considered the culinary capital of the world, and not to have experienced fine dining, the "French" way would be a gastronomic tragedy.

Taillevent is considered one of the grandest dining institutions in Paris. Founded in 1946 by André Viénot, the restaurant was named after Guillaume Tirel (nicknamed Taillevent), the court chef to King Charles V in the 14th century who was fortunate to have written the first ever cuisine book.

The town house that Taillevent ran on since 1998 is steeped in French history. It used to be built in 1852 as a residence for Napoleon III's goldsmith by Guillaume Tirel, the Duc de Morny.

Jean-Claude Vrinat, the son of Taillevent's founder and the man responsible for personally handpicking the 5,000-or so selection of wines in the restaurant cellar, has presided over the dining room since 1972 and runs a tight ship.

Even personally welcoming his faithful clientele as well as new patrons until his passing last January.

Taillevent has held 3 stars in the Michelin guide since 1973, with chef Alain Solderis at the helm of the kitchen since 2002. The restaurant has played host to the likes of political heavyweights Mikhail Gorbachev and Jacques Chirac, industrial giant Steve Jobs, fashion legend Robert de Givenchy, and Hollywood royalty Audrey Hepburn and Angelina Jolie.

In 2007 however, the restaurant was stripped of a Michelin star. A number of restaurant correspondents decried this almost unconscionable demotion, and this intrigued me immensely. And that was the clincher—I booked us a table three to four "unforgettable lobster dining experiences," where the hopes of finding out for myself if the restaurant indeed deserved 1, instead of 3 stars.

And so my gastronomic journey began at Taillevent with taking hints of the warm cheese cheeses as I pored over the menu—all in French. With much help in translation from the very affable Jean-Marie Amchez, the restaurant director who was born with Taillevent for 35 years, we got around to ordering.

Our waiter, a small, pleasant-looking bowl of chicken quenelle arrived shortly after. A spoonful of this fine steamer immediately unmasked a surprisingly delightful aftertaste of popcorn. To say it's an interesting dish is almost an understatement.

I ordered the *ravioncine de perroux de lièvre rôti*—this dish of pastried potatoes, topped with a ravioli-type concoction of finely minced black truffles, came full circle in the taste department with the egg yolk center. I've honestly never had anything so remarkable...it was like tasting heaven on my lips. The playing itself was an understatement and was enough to be described to eat.

To complete the meal, I went with the classic bubcoin return (drum roast) and I was glad I did. The cake was very moist, and cooked with just the right amount of sweet.

As we went about dinner, we could also help but notice the attentive yet unobtrusive service that each diner received. With only a gesture, our glasses were constantly refilled with our wine of choice, a moderately priced Bordeaux had 2005 Moulin de Rothschild. Servers was par excellence.

The three hours or so of dining in this fine institution was truly unforgettable. In the end, Taillevent will continue to be a temple of culinary and service perfection, with or without that last Michelin star in my book at least. Taillevent is one of, if not the best restaurant in Paris and deserves those 3 stars.

CRABMEAT with Caviar

Stripped of its 3-star grading, Taillevent of Paris remains a gastronomic experience

FOOD and foodie
NICK MALGIERI
The Modern Baker
Baking, Pastry & Confectionery Seminar

LIFESTYLE

One woman's love for cooking spawns a rich cultural and culinary legacy

SINIGANG na Ulang

Food, poetry and beauty in Mama Sita's Malolos

CRISPY fried fillo

Rehydrate & Whiten your skin with EXFOLIATING PEEL & DIAMOND FACIAL TREATMENT
the solution for Oily, Pigmented Skin & Open Pores
As a celebrity, I make sure I look my best even under pressure. This treatment makes me confident ready on the field
Ellen's

Text by Margie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Rudel Reyes

MALOLOS, BULACAN is home to Teresita Reyes, founder of Mama Sita's famous line of mixes and sauces. A trao-lilao Malolenta, Reyes lived a full life with hubby Fidel and 11 children.

A group of media people was recently given a glimpse of how the Reyeses lived and treasured family togetherness in this province. Ramon Reyes, Mama Sita's ninth child, led the tour.

First stop was the Reyes Mausoleum, where patriarch of the family takes first and second, some to babot sepia, are on exhibit.

This was followed by a visit to some of the town's old houses, including the Bautista Mansion, favored along Kamestizan Street, this ancestral mansion was visited by national hero Dr. Jose Rizal to condemn the three Martyrdom of the Six Gomburza of Bulakan to join his revolt group, La Liga Filipina. The Bautista were relatives of the Reyeses.

The highlight of the one-day trip was a three-hour Rural lunch aboard a pitoys (an old boat made of thick wooden planks) along the Calumpit river.

Stocked with colorful bandaritas and oiled coconut leaves, the boat traversed the Hagonoy river towards Calumpit, where the Reyeses lived a farm.

The Mama Sita culinary staff, led by chef Nicky Dalisanga, chilled out honey meals of lingang na Ulang (using Mama Sita's original sinigang sa sampalok (tamarind) mix, of course!), Fish

TERESITA "Mama Sita" Reyes (right), eldest daughter of Doña Engracia "Ning Asiong" Reyes, founder of de la Rosa restaurant and grand matriarch of Philippine restaurateurs.

FOOD 5>

BARASOAIN Church, a national shrine

HOME-COOKED Filipino dishes using Mama Sita's line of mixes and sauces

DINING OUT

7-course Cantonese set menu for lunch

CHOOSE BETWEEN TWO 7-COURSE Cantonese set menus at **The Benaissance Makati City Hotel's Emperor Court** until May 31. Chef Express is available during lunch, Monday to Friday.

The first set menu is composed of a dim sum combination, stuffed bean curd with canapé and bamboo pith, wok-fried fillet of pampano with celery in XO sauce, steamed prawns in garlic, deep-fried spare ribs with mango, fried rice using chow style and French fruit platter.

The second set menu is composed of **barbecued meat combination**, hot and sour soup, wok-fried shrimps with celery and cashew nuts in XO sauce, steamed fillet of pampano with golden basil's corn in garlic sauce, pan-fried beef tenderloin Chinese style, braised ees noodles with shredded chicken and fruit platter. Call 811-0888.

RENAISSANCE Makati City Hotel's Emperor Court's 7-course Cantonese set menu

Summer flavors at Aranneta

Chill out through the hot months at Aranneta Center's cool treats. At Gateway Mall, **Ellas** serves up fat-fo Special. At **Burgos**, savor Baked Scry with Shiitake, Grilled Chicken and Shrimps, Pan-Seared Seabass and Grilled Atlantic White Salmon. **Max's** offers all-day favorites and coffee and cake treat. **Pizza Hut** likens up critters Crab and Mushroom Dip, Mango BBQ Chicken, Hawaiian Bake. For your Mexican cravings, there's **Taco Bell Starbucks** has branches at Gateway, Ali Mall and Araneta Cubao's Circle. Summer snacks are also available at **Baby Queen**. At Ali Mall, **Gerry's Grill** offers Nilo-Hybrid, Maple corn fritters, guinamos special. **Ba Mate Bonchon** at Araneta Cubao's Circle serves Bubbles for 12 flavors. At Shopwise Arcade, **Pancit ng Taga Malolos** gives two choices for its Summer Solo Solo Meal. At Farmers Plaza, you can find **Charly Brown** and its best Charly fruits and Pinakuluts.

Seaside resto's new offerings

Pantalan Bicolandia Restaurant, one of the country's first few seafood restaurants, is introducing new flavors and recipes. Pantalan's five seafood restaurants now have entrees, which is best served grilled. Other staples include crab, lobster, jumbo prawns and mayo-mayo. Those looking for a more pastoral experience should try the sizzling Tinapa Tapenyuki, Sizzling Sambas and Sizzling Liliti.

Vegetable dishes include Laing Especial, Pinakbet, Kangkong at Lemon and Hubad na Kalabasa. Finally steamed vegetables served with a special sauce. Among the soup choices, recommended are Sinigang sa Miso, Inihaw na Bangus Belly and Seafood Kare-Kare.

Dinner's who fancy sinigang will be spoiled for choices, since the sinigang soup base now comes in sampaloc, bayabas and calamansi. Sinigang sa Sampaloc is best with ulo at siyam ng salmon, for the Bayabas Sinigang Base, banguilo belly, and for the Miso Sinigang, sugpo and liempo. Kare-Kare chicken Binalot sa Dahon Chicken, deep-fried chicken served with a butter sauce and Ginataang Manok.

Popular pork dishes include Crispy Pa-lauan Baby Back Ribs. Other new meal dishes are Kalderetang Kambing, Inihaw na Tadyang ng Baka and Beef Kare-Kare. The seafood dishes include Baked Tahong, Crispy Danlis, Crunchy Breaded and Tilapia, Inihaw na Salmon Belly and Seafood Kare-Kare.

After making a comeback in the Seafood Ribbit Pilos, cooked and served in a bamboo tube. Must-try dishes are Hinalabang Lato with Mango Strips and Seafood Platter—a gastronomic collection of grilled shrimp, squid, mussel and cuttlefish. Located at the old Army-Navy Complex on Rizal Park in Manila, the restaurant is a popular stop for nature lovers with its view of Manila Bay. Call 4857113.

Wilfredo Bello' at P39

Alfredo Bello features one yummy choice all for P39 at **Taco Bell**: Chicken Isobelli Crunchy Taco, Bean Burrito, Beef Combo Burrito, Cheese Quesadilla, Churros, Chimmy Hindu Potatoes, Pork BBQ Burrito, Nachos and Grilled Pork BBQ Burrito. Taco Bell is at Gateway Mall (ground floor and Food Express), Araneta Center, SM Southmall, Las Pinas; P. Paredes Avenue in Sampaloc City, and Tiendesta.

Rice club

If you like your pork crisp and succulent, try **Rambi Club's** Crispy Lechon. Other favorites are Crispy Binagoon, Binakolan na Tilapia, Spicy Tahong, Sautéed Kare-Kare, Crispy Beef Salad, Tortilla, Bicol Combo and Kinsang Pusit Salad. Breakfast/Merienda with Salted Egg, Tocsilog, Embutelog, Tapsilog, Longsilog, Tosilog, Hotsilog, Bangsilog

THE CONSUMER
Linda B. Bohdo

'Tingi' may not be the best way to buy your medicine

FLORIEDA APOLINARIO, WHO SAYS SHE is a Lasa resident at the Ateneo de Manila University, has expressed concern "regarding expiry dates of over-the-counter drugs."

Apolinario said she recently went to search of a headache remedy and found several suitable products in her home. The problem, however, was "I had no idea whether or not those medicines were still good." The expiry date was not written on any of the items.

Apolinario's next point is very valid given the Filipino consumer's buying habits.

"Here in the Philippines many of these types of pills can be easily purchased by piece from our drugstores and even sari-sari stores. However, consumers have no way of double-checking the expiry date because most of these drugs that come in bottle only have the expiry information embossed on the side of the [brand] packaging. Therefore, we consumers would not really know whether the medicine we purchased has expired or not."

I have mentioned this problem countless ago, as in most developing countries, ordinary Filipinos find it more practical to buy drugs "piece-by-piece" or "tingi." Their budget would only go so far, so they will not buy many things until and unless they need them. And they rarely buy things in bulk.

That is why many people stand in line everyday to buy rice. They have only enough for what they need that day, as that commodity, to the neighborhood sari-sari store is a necessity.

In many households, people do not buy cooking oil and vinegar and garlic and salt until many other things in bottles or jars, kits or bundles. When they need these cooking essentials, they would send a child, or they themselves, would go to the nearest sari-sari store and buy a cup of vinegar or cooking oil or a head of garlic.

And when they have a headache or a stomachache or muscle pains, the sari-sari store dwellers as a mini drugstore where they can get whatever medicine they want to take for their various aches and pains.

Since even the economy drugs are sold in several purchases, the sari-sari store still can keep them in bulk and may just buy a few pieces, considering the purchasing habits of the neighborhood.

Given the way these drugs are currently packaged, the sari-sari store owner himself/herself will have no idea if the medicines are past their expiration dates.

Like me, Apolinario wants expiration information written on the package of every tablet or capsule so that, whether consumers get their medicines from a drugstore or a sari-sari store, they will not risk buying expired medicines just because they can only afford to buy tingi.

Grateful to DTI

Rosalee Merdida C. de Guzman wants to thank the Legal Affairs Course of the Department of Trade and Industry Southeast Capital Region for helping resolve her problems with Fast Hyundai inc.

The office referred her e-mail to the company's management, which promptly got in touch with Dr Guzman. Seller and buyer have come to an amicable settlement of the problem.

Send letters to The Consumer, Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Mascardo and Rizal sts., Makati City; or e-mail lbohdo@inquirer.com.ph

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Make Mom Feel Like She's 21 Again

with gift ideas she'll surely enjoy!

watsons

Food, poetry and beauty in Mama Sita's Malolos

From page E1

FLUVIAL LUNCH. Decorated with colorful sando line and dried coconut leaves, the pinays traverse the Hagonoy River

with Durian and Jose Sauce Lasing MD sweet and sour rub and achieve amazing **pasalay**). **Sinalabang Lemayan Tagalog** (with MS pandano vinegar), Pork Barbecue, **Calugo Fried Fliet** and **Inabawag Hal-dhao** (MS Dipped in MS coconut vinegar and sabong wine vinegar).

Desserts consisted of Balisan's sweets such as puntilla de leche, puntilla de mani and maruquesa.

Ramon still remembered how his mom always took the family on this boat ride on weekends.

"She would cook for the family and bring the food on the boat," he recalled. "She liked the breezy afternoon and would invite people or serenade her (her sons)."

To recall those good old days, Ramon invited a group of singles/solos and mono-lobolgyan (the traditional Filipino debate in rime) from the Pinoy K Sakdalgo Production to perform on board for the group.

Peping Pelaez and Carmen Camacho, the king and queen of Balisan kundiman, serenaded the crowd with "Sa Bayhay Dagat" and "Kundiman ng Lagayan," while Gilberto, on the other hand, performed an impromptu love lament.

The two ended such a visit to Barasoain Church, a national shrine and the site of the Constitutional Convention of the first Philippine Republic. The Gumazan Orchestra, led by Nathaniel Wenceslao, managed by the National Historical Institute, features a collection of municipal marches and provincial anthems, including a Bulacan tune written during the Republica de Ilocano for the inauguration of the Malolos Republic, and a wedding gown created by Ramon Valera in the 1960s.

Visitors were also delighted to see a light- and sound presentation depicting key events in the Philippine Revolution, as well as a 20-minute dramatization of the life of The Women of Malolos, who defied the ban on women the right to education during the Spanish era.

A merienda of pancit canton, pan de sal with coconut pinilig and sorbetes with pink candy using 365 calves and sisters capped the day-long food trip.

RAMON Bayaconsh kundiman singers

PORTRAYING the life of The Women of Malolos

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Sinigang na Ulang

4 c water
½ c tamarind, sliced
½ c calamansi, quartered
1 pouch Mama Sita's Sinigang Mix
1 ½ c okra, destemmed and trimmed
½ c radish, sliced diagonally
1 c slim eggplant, sliced 2" lengths
3 pc long green pepper
1 c leafy greens (kangkong or spinach)

In a saucepan, combine water, tamarind and calamansi. Bring to a boil. Simmer for five minutes.

Pour in 1 pouch Mama Sita's Sinigang Tamarind Seasoning Mix. Increase the heat and bring to a rolling boil.

Add whole uncooked ulang and radish. Add long green beans, green pepper and pechay tops.

Cover and simmer for another three minutes or until the ulang are cooked. Turn off the heat and add the green leafy vegetables. Cover to steam cook vegetables.

Serve hot with rice.

Variations: half-kilo fish, shrimp, pork or beef ribs/cubes previously boiled until tender can be used instead of ulang.

Makes three to four servings.

Lumpiang Hubad

2 tbsp oil
1 small onion, sliced and cut into strips
1 small carrot, cut into strips
4-5 pc Baguio beans, thinly sliced diagonally
¼ kg cogon, washed and roots removed
3 tbsp water
1 small sweet potato, cut into strips
1 pouch Mama Sita's Pang-Gisa Mix
1 stalk kinchay, coarsely chopped
½ c milk, heat oil. Fry the sweet potato until soft.

Sauté carrot and singkamas for two minutes then add the beans and cogon in the same pan. Add Mama Sita's Pang-Gisa Mix. Stir until done. Add the lumpia and kinchay. Stir until blended.

Serve hot with Mama Sita's Jiwa Sauce.

For Jiwa Sauce see page 3.

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Bernie G. Velarde

'Pinoning' gets 'A' grade; 'When Love Begins,' 'B'

THE CESDB Evaluation Board (CEB) has given Dante Nico Garcia's debut film "Pinoning" a grade of "A," meriting a 100-percent rebate on amusement tax. CEB members say the feel-nice fantasy-starrer as "uniquely Filipino and visually breathtaking."

On the other hand, Jose Javier Reyes' "When Love Begins" received a "B" rating, entitling it to a 65-percent tax rebate. Both films opened in cinemas yesterday. The CEB, which operates under the Film Development Council of the Philippines, grants tax rebates to well-crafted local films.

Jayzel Jaya Diaga-A

DID YOU KNOW..

Gabby-Iza starrer set

A GMA Films executive said on Tuesday that Iza Calzado will be Gabby Concepcion's leading lady for his comeback movie, to be written and directed by Jose Javier Reyes. Jayzel Jaya Diaga-Jr.

INSIDE

Buboy should be less hyper as 'Singing Bee' host Viewfinder /F5

A rockin' treat this way comes May 2 /F5

TV series revives 'Terminator' sans Arnie Review /F6

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It's just impossible to have fun with dull, lifeless and thinning hair, reserve Designer Tessa Prieto-Valdes says. "You tend to cover your head and feel self-conscious. Could you imagine how depressing and frustrating that is! Perk up! Regain your hair, regain your confidence - because life is about having fun!"

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'Jaguar' and 'Bayan Ko,' not 'Orapronobis'

PROF. JOSE F. LACABA, by phone:

Regarding Manuel E. Cruz's story on Rolando "Dante" Mendiola's "Serbis" competing in Cannes (noting that two other movie, Lino Brocka's "Orapronobis," had similarly competed earlier)—"Orapronobis" was chosen out of competition. The only other Filipino films previously shown in competition in Cannes were "Jaguar" and "Bayan Ko: Kapit sa Patalim," both by Brocka.

Next clown, please!

From Phil Mangahas (dbmangas@yahoo.com) of Quezon City:

Hey, this site. These rumors are all over the newsstands, most pages agree. First, La Greco inflicted her [bodyworkings and] her "whispering hot" singing voice on the hapless public. Now comes eventual starlet Heart Evangelista making a big fuss about her move to another network. Really, who cares? Hey, stop compelling reasons it any balok fa signers in old home nations na, 'no? A mediocre talent moving to more mediocre productions is our exactly big names. Next clowns, please.

Mabuhay, Madonna!

From Emil (emil4444@yahoo.com):

Please convey my heartfelt regards to Madonna Ilovena. I am praying for her success. I am also a Filipino overseas contract worker, based in Yemen, and I am very proud to be Pinoy. Filipinos are one of a kind in the world. Mabuhay ka, Madonna! I hope you win the contest, and God bless you.

Another Pinoy

From kris_8214441@yahoo.com:

I was searching for more videos of Filipinos or half-Filipinos idioms around the world. And came across one of Charlie Green, a 30-sure old "poster boy" PI Bill. (His mom looks Pinay). He impressed filmmaker very much (for judge wise caught on-cue mapping his fingers).

Bells/PDI fan

From Catherin Sy (catherine_sy77@yahoo.com):

Greetings! I would like to know if you have any info about auditions for "Tiara Bells"? (There are no more auditions for the forthcoming season, according to the network.—ED.)

Yesterday, my daughter and I attended the Annie Intensive Read-Along at Robinsons Galleria. Thank you for teaching children how to be Eco Developers.

FEEDBACK

AT THE CINEMAS

AT THE MALLS

Lawyer: Stalker's creepy note romantic, not criminal

NEW YORK—A FORMER HEDDA Hopper's note that his hands should be on Uma Thurman's body "in all times" may be creepy but it is not criminal, a lawyer told Monday in defense of a man accused of stalking the "Kill Bill" actress.

Lawyers George Bonwiddie told the state Supreme Court jury in his opening statement that defendant Jack Jordan "does not think the way you and I think. He doesn't know the boundaries you and I know. He thinks it's romantic."

But Assistant District Attorney Colleen

UMA THURMAN is the object of accused stalker Jack Jordan's obsession, Jordan, above right, is shown leaving a New York court on Monday after the first day of trial. AP PHOTO

Walsh told the jurors that Jordan had tried to communicate with Thurman sporadically for more than two years, "with the issues he has us, among Heroin and others" her.

Walsh said Jordan used "emotional blackmail" to try to get in the "Pulp Fiction" star. She said he sent her family an e-mail saying, "I will kill myself if I do not get to see Uma Thurman within 24 to 48 hours."

Walsh said the family kept that and several other e-mails from Thurman, 37, because the messages would create her fear. The prosecutor said she screens and her family members will testify about the messages from Jordan.

Walsh said Jordan showed up at a Lower Manhattan movie set on Nov. 8, 2005, where Thurman was filming "My Super Ex Girlfriend" and tried to get into her trailer.

Guy in love

The prosecutor said Jordan also appeared at Thurman's Greenwich Village home, where she lives with her two children, and rang her doorbell.

Bonwiddie said his client had no intention to harass or threaten Thurman because he loved her. "Creepy? Yes. Obsessed? Yes. Criminal? No," the defense lawyer told the jury.

Jordan, 37, was arrested in October 2007. Bonwiddie said in January he hoped to avoid a trial and work out a plea deal in which Jordan would enter a psychiatric treatment program. He said Jordan had been diagnosed with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

Jordan is free on $10,000 bail. He is a 1994 graduate of the University of Chicago and is a graduate student at Mills College in Oakland, California, his attorney said. AP

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MOVIEWORLD

MILEY Cyrus AP PHOTO

Parents still mad at Miley

ACTRESS/SINGER Miley Cyrus took a shutdown on Monday in the media and from some parents of her young fans, who were still angry over sexually provocative pictures of the 15-year-old [illegible] despite her earlier apology.

Miley Cyrus said on Sunday she was embarrassed by a photo spread appearing in the upcoming issue of Vanity Fair in a statement. Cyrus apologized "to my fans whom I care so deeply about."

She is one of the biggest stars in the US and is considered a role model for young girls. Reuters, AP

'The Singing Bee' poses dauntingly difficult challenges

AFTER "8, THE P1 MILLION SUDOKU Challenge" and "Don't Forget the Lyrics," there's a third game show for shoppers that's currently being televised weeknights on the tube: ABS-CBN's "The Singing Bee," hosted by Cesar Montano.

We caught the new game show's first telecast (after "Kung Fu Kids") last April 21, and observed that it makes for exciting audience viewing because it demands so much from its contestants on pain of remembering the lyrics of a wide range of songs.

Buena mano celebrity contestants Jodi Sta.Maria, Iwah, Bayani Agbayani, Gerik Vicente, Jessica Reyes and Heart Evangelista bested this not for themselves when they competed last week. They weren't acting when they looked wonderful, confused and occasionally even mystified as the show's challenges came fast and furious.

In fact, the show runs on inherently absorbing (but in standard boxy of soap dancers were unnecessary distractions—the program could certainly do without them.

That Cesar was also too unnecessarily hyper—he didn't have to whip up such a big lather because the show's excitement level was already high.

The first challenge was for the contestants to continue singing the lyrics of a song after the live studio band had stopped playing. The "Sandalwan" contestants overcompensated because it required the contestants to quickly make sense of a bunch of mixed-up lyrics.

'Showdown' round

Beatrix, Heart, Bayani and Jacob were quickly eliminated, leaving Jodi and Gerik to compete in the "Showdown" round. Jodi got up a good fight, but Gerik ultimately won out.

This gave some viewers a sense of déjà vu because, remember back, Pooh had won P2 million on "1 vs 100." Would he be able to continue with his winning streak?

The final round required Pooh to recall the lyrics of seven songs—if he got five right, he would win the jackpot of P1 million. Alas, he wasn't able to measure up to that difficult challenge—but Pooh still won viewers' admiration because some of the song lyrics he did recall were quite obscure.

The new show's plus factors include Mari Villena and Sir Isaid. On the other hand, some of the program's resident singers could encounter with greater clarity, or make it easier for the contestants to accurately latch onto the songs they perform.

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

It would also be good if, once in a while, Cesar himself would sing part of a song or two. To further enliven the proceedings, a guest singer could occasionally be invited to perform.

Not so incidentally, the entry of "The Singing Bee" is most welcome, because it adds to the variety of shows telecast during the evening prime time hours. For much too long, but-one long slot been dominated by telenovelas, which was counter to the public's right to varied TV viewing options.

New film review

Based on a true story, "22" chronicles the efforts of college students to use their brilliance to win a lot of money at the blackjack tables in Las Vegas casinos. Stars include Kevin Spacey and Laurence Fishburne.

"Star Wars: The Clone Wars," pits favorite characters like Anakin Skywalker, Obi-Wan Kenobi and Padme Amidala and new heroes like Anakin's padawan learner, Ahsoka, against villains like Pinpoint, Count Dooku and General Grievous.

In the "Dark Knight," Batman enters the stakes in his war on crime. He sets out to dismantle the criminal organization that plagues the city streets. But he and his allies soon find themselves contending with a reign of chaos unleashed by a rising criminal mastermind known to the terrified citizens of Gotham as The Joker (Heath Ledger, in his last screen portrayal). Christian Bale plays Batman, and Christopher Nolan directs.

In the animated feature, "WALL-E," an old robot discovers a new purpose in life when he meets a sleek, high-tech robot named Eve. She realizes that he's inadvertently stumbled on the key to the planet's future, and races to tell mankind. Jonathan Morris is the lead. WALL-E shares Eve across the galaxy, and sets into motion an exciting and imaginative comedy adventure through strolling by creative visions of the future.

Roundup

'Voice of McDo'

MCDONALD'S employee Mary Margaret Yu bagged the second

prize in the finale night of the "Voice of McDonald's 2008" held in Orlando, Florida on April 20.

The 22-year-old Davao resident and choir member took home $15,000.

The grand prize was won by Sushmita Pillai of Portugal.

It was a close fight for both girls, who competed with 3,000 McDonald's crew members and managers from 120 countries during the first elimination round.

A powerful rendition of Whitney Houston's "I Have Nothing" earned cost to be Yu's passport in the big showdown, where she received a standing ovation.

Avenue Q' final run

Manila Productions announces the final run of "Avenue Q," the hit Broadway-musical about real life in New York City, as told by a cast of people and puppets.

The musical stars Alex Seguerra, Freeshie Di, Felix Rivera, Raphaelo Bowley, Theresa Ortiz and Joel Trinidad.

It will be staged on June 13 to 22 at the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium, RCBC Plaza, Makati. Call 891-9999.

Online game expansion

Lineage II, a popular online game, has been expanded with the newest installation of "The Samael: The First Throne" by Asian Media Development's lineup at the Megamodo Hall 2

of SM Megamall.

It is the newest episode of Lineage II, a medieval fantasy massively multiplayer online role-playing game created by NCsoft.

The new single-winged race featured is the latest addition or in five existing races: Human, Elf, Dark Elf, Orc and Dwarf.

Other key features to come for all Lineage II players are the 24/7 Fortress Battles, the massive transformation of characters, and improved game balance.

Music menu

Travel Cafe Philippines, a Mediterranean theme lifestyle cafe at Level 2, Greenbelt 3 in Ayala Center, Makati, offers a music experience courtesy of Sony BMG Philippines.

The exclusive musical selection includes modern renditions of traditional Filipino hits from Syan Cayabyab, Lessie Dramayo, Lea Salonga, Apo Hiking Society and Rodrigo Tarra.

Call 525-6110.

Teleradyo on the Net

SUMO Teleradyo is now available on TFCnow (www.tfcnow.com), a video and audio-streaming subscription service on the Internet that provides Filipinos worldwide access to shows from ABS-CBN.

This was announced by ABS-CBN Broadcasting VP for Manila Radio Division Peter Musngi, who will head the promotion of Teleradyo in California by participating in the World Caravan organized by the Philippine Tourism Authority.

New contracts

Award-winning news personalities Arnold Clavio and Vicky Morales recently renewed their contracts with GMA Network. Clavio and Morales anchor the late night newscast "Saksi." GMA EVP for News and Public Affairs Maria Q. Flores, GMA Network chairman/CEO Felipe L. Gozon, and GMA EVP/COO Gilberto R. Duavit Jr. were present during the contract signing.

Birthday treat

TV host Ricky Reyes celebrated his birthday at the Center for Health Improvement and Life Development (Child) Haus in Quezon City, a haven for pediatric cancer patients that he helped set up in 2001.

On the same day, he launched an art therapy program that uses painting as a method to diffuse stress and anxiety among patients in patients.

Photo shows Reyes preparing to blow a candle on his birthday cake at Child Haus residents' look on.

Program for filmmakers

The Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company-Smart Foundation recently awarded a P1.million grant to this year's Cinemabahay winner, "Cal de Luz," which will be shown as part of PLDT's 30th year celebration.

Cinemabahay is a PLDT-Smart Foundation program that helps young filmmakers produce quality movies.

Juan de la Cruz to play with MPO

By Pachela Concepcion

WHAT'S THE MANILA METEOROLOGY DOing in a roundup of rock musicians?

It's quite a night—Philly Gonzalez, Mike Hanopol, JR Lucas, Lutel de Veyra and others bowing their heads as Gutchero Cardinal Rosales joins them on the piano con for "Hosts ng Muthang Filipino," a series of concerts at the Cultural Center of the Philippines Main Theater from May 23 to 4.

The promoters are donating proceeds to the John Huey Vintero Golfer Development and Bethue Center for Priests in Tagaytay, which explains Rosales' presence.

Inspirational rock

"All rock is inspirational," the Cardinal says. He probably means that even raging punk icons or indignant protest songs are really aspire for a higher goal.

In any case, a look at the performers' lineup for "Hosts" should inspire cheerful thoughts: The Juan de la Cruz Band, backed by the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra, with guests Sugarfree, Up Dharma Down and violinist Lorin Maazel's (conductor); JSC, MPO, The Jerks, Radioactive Sago Project and Masseli (May 31, and Willy Gonzalez and friends, Rivermist and The Dawn (May 4).

The concerts may look chaotic at first glance. How, for instance, would the environ-mame guitar licks in JSC's "Kung Kung" meld with the MPO's symphonic passages? Or will the raw, bluesy sound of "Hamugot na Pilipinas" sound as good with violins?

"We've done it before," says Gonzalez. "Twice, in fact."

Rock operas

He's talking about a couple of shows in 1978 that featured the original JSC (with the late Edmund Nolasco on drums, and before Hanopol and Soulfu joined the band) performing "Jesus Christ Superstar" and "Deep Purple's "Concerto" with the Philippine Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra conducted by Lutel de Veyra and Redentor Buenaventura conducting their respective orchestras, also at the CCP.

However, these are rock operas, whose composers (Andrew Lloyd Webber for "Jesus Christ Superstar" and Deep Purple's Jon Lord for "Concerto") had everything down in music sheets. JSC merely interpreted them as original works that they heard on records.

This time, fans inclined will JSC's own songs—apparently without with a much less formal approach (although JSC remembers, with guitar duende) for with this vocal musicians who rely on whole, half and quarter notes, and routinely play under the guidance of a conductor?

Not to worry, assures Rudel Colmenares, MPO conductor, who says that, although it's indeed a challenge, the orchestra's role is to enhance the original music.

He proceeds to illustrate with an example that excites: "Himig Natin" will be augmented by Rhamell's violin.

"That sounds like you're in heaven," jokes Gonzalez. (Maxwell provided dramatic flourishes to a great performance in Jodi Gerbau's concert at the PICC.)

The younger musicians are simply awed by the thought of playing with Gonzalez, Hanopol and Manila...considered the grandfathers who spawned Pinoy rock.

MIKE Hanopol (above) and Joey "Pepe" Smith (below), "grandfathers" of Pinoy rock

Dream come true

"As a kid, I used to hope I'd get to see the Juan de la Cruz play in a group," says Gonzalez. "I never did, not even the former's solo concerts. Now I'll get to play with them, with my own band! (The Dawn) to boot. I think it will be a very exciting experience for me."

"It's like dreaming a step to learn where we came from and where we are headed" quips De Veyra, who's a nephew of Hanopol's. "My only regret is not getting to

play with Pepe (who was late for the press con) and the Gutierrez together."

Later, De Veyra relents that his band, Radioactive Sago Project, to see to play Anak Bayan's "Serpentry Blues" and a Heyzy Villasor song called "Tropik."

News that sounds like a truly festive blast.

E-mail pcmconcepcion@inquirer.com.ph

Grizzly that killed trainer is 'gentle'

LOS ANGELES—BY ALL ACCOUNTS, Rocky was one of the most gentle and affectionate animals to be found in Hollywood's vast exotic menagerie of performing lions, tigers and bears—until he clamped the 700-pound (318-kg) grizzly bit down on the neck of a veteran trainer and killed him.

In some animal rights activists, longtime Miller's death Tuesday last week was a tragedy waiting to happen for an industry that should be retiring wild animals in favor of computer-generated images. But as members of Hollywood's tight-knit animal community of exotic animal trainers, a veterinarian and a cop who responded, it's a reminder of a time last accepted hazard in an industry they insist is no more dangerous than racing cars or fighting fires.

"If it came right down to it, if the same protocols were in place, I'd say that the same again," said veteran trainer Joel Almquist, who worked with Rocky hundreds of times as he prepared the grizzly for his scene in the movie "Seven Five."

In the film, which received the American Humane Association's "outstanding" rating for its handling of Rocky, Will Ferrell agrees to wrestle a bear to promote his semi-pro basketball team. In reality, the scene never got close to the bears, with a trainer acting as a mere double and a person in a bear suit standing in as stunts for the animal.

Investigation

Something went terribly wrong, however, when Miller, 39, put the bear through a similar workout as his cousin Randy Miller's Predators in Action exotic animal compound in the mountains 100 miles (160 km) north of Los Angeles. His death is being investigated by the state Department of Industrial Relations, and the bear's fate is still undetermined.

Several animal handlers and monitors interviewed by AP have been on accident. Almquist figures the bear simply got too excited and let down because there is meant to.

"Bears do nips at times sometimes and it's not an aggressive thing. It's like a pet your scratch on thing," Almquist said.

That kind of risk isn't acceptable, says Lisa Wathne of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. "We frankly are not surprised that this incident happened," she said. "No one should be surprised when a captive wild animal follows its natural instinct and shows aggression toward humans."

AP

From Beverly Hills to Bogota

DASHER as Vince Chase, right, and as Chase in "Medellin," left.

CLICK!

VINCE CHASE AND HIS MANAGER JOE have landed their dream project, "Medellin," but shooting it in Bogota, Colombia, with eccentric director Billy Walsh is a nightmare.

To make matters worse, a documentary crew has tagged along. Eric is charged with maintaining the budget and the crew's morale—not easy, since Vince has fallen for his female lead and endorses sex on the set.

This is the take-off point for Season 6 of HBO's "Entourage," premiering May 5. A media preview was recently held aboard a yacht, recalling a party scene in the series.

Aboard: Hey scene actors swapped table-scene story-compelling images on the owners' tour up on the deck, being dressed up (those tables), including pretty boy Vince as the lead character in "Medellin," in a body suit and with face painting. Yikes.

Adrian Grenier, a Manhattan-bred actor/filmmaker/musician, has certainly grown into the role of Vince, an actor who's brought his pals with him from New York to Hollywood, where his star rises.

To drink he was not interested in the character at first. In fact, he didn't like "Entourage" at all.

"I thought it was a little superficial," Grenier notes says. "But I've since learned a lot about enjoying myself. 'Entourage' has taught me how to laugh and enjoy life in a way that I never would before."

Woman power fuels 'Terminator' series on C/S, AXN

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

REVIEW

SCIENCE FICTION AND ACTION movie icon Sarah Connor, played by Linda Hamilton in two previous blockbuster "Terminator" movies, is revived in a weekly TV series that expounds on its mythology "Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles" debuts tomorrow (the turn-to-the-drive premiere, giving new life to an tough heroine.

Sarah, mother to John, the chief leader of the human resistance, is back. But it's not the gritty warrior women are remember. Taking over the role is Lena Headey (Queen Gorgo in "300"), who has a less overwhelming presence, and not as finely developed muscles, as Hamilton's gritty tough Connor built in the day.

Headey, however, is just as good as serious. She lends credibility to the character, who has grown complacent a few years after the events of "Terminator 2: Judgment Day." That's where the story picks up; it disregards the third "Terminator" film, "Rise of the Machines," where Connor was written out as having succumbed to cancer.

"Sarah Connor Chronicles" focuses on the titular character and her son, now John's (Thomas Dekker) rumored new wife (Summer Terminator cyborg) from the future. But their saga has grown to include a new female Terminator, Cameron (Summer Glau), programmed to protect John from all threats. Time-traveling to 2007, the fugitive trio once again tries to prevent Armageddon, avoiding undercover Terminators and the authorities along the way. They discover artificial intelligence programs and projects that would rid the planet of human inhabitants.

Less brisk

The pacing of the series requires some getting used to. Certain episodes break free from the typical three-fight-four commercial-and-elaborate or meaningful human interaction. The movies couldn't do this, on account of their limited span. But the action scenes, integral to the "Terminator" films, are somewhat contrived and not as brisk here. Also, some episodes are stretched to the point of predictability.

Still, Glau convincingly plays a Terminator that's more real as thinking one moment, and as eccentric high school student the next. The addition of Brian Austin Green as a badass rebel soldier from the future shakes things up for the show with classic scenes, as he's revealed to have important connections to Sarah.

Distancing

The show can still get better by explaining every angles that the series missed, such as the changing modern-age dynamic. A few episodes into the first season, some interesting story possibilities have already presented themselves. Make one wonder where it's headed, given the deliberate distancing from the third film, where the dreaded robot-mind future becomes a reality.

No Arnold

Arnold Schwarzenegger as the T-800 isn't missed all that much; the series stands impressively without him. Headey's narration bookends every episode, often alluding to the deeper symbolism of Sarah's turbulent journey and her never-ending burden that while her chronicles deserves marketing, the show needs to speed things up and make things less mechanical.

"Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles" airs on C/S-2PM and AXN.

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